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Miss Blanche Foot
South Bend,
Indiana.

Christmas 1902.



"This is Ted, Pen. Ted, this is Miss Randolph; can't you shake hands?"—
Page 30. *Pen's Venture.*






Pen's Venture

  *A STORY FOR GIRLS*

By ELVIRTON WRIGHT



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
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PEN'S VENTURE.

CHAPTER I.

AN IDEA.

PEN — more correctly, Miss Penelope Randolph — grasped the hearth-brush with much determination and proceeded to brush up the hearth.

The action caused René to look at her in surprise.

“I don’t believe I ever saw you do that of your own accord before! What is the matter?”

“I — Oh, I thought I would!” rather vaguely. “It is so much neater to be neat. How much do you make it?”

The question referred to René’s occupation. It was her custom every Saturday afternoon to count her money. She was

sitting by the table with her money laid in little piles before her. She had re-arranged it several times without altering the sum total. There was a little pile of bills, a little heap of silver, a few stray coppers and two two-cent postage-stamps.

"Twenty-five dollars, six cents, and two stamps," was the meditative answer. "It would have been more if it had not been for that!" pointing with fine scorn to the sofa. Standing on the sofa, leaning against the back, were two neatly framed little water-colors. A packing-box and paper showed that they had just been unpacked. "Expressage for those!"

No one would have suspected from her tone that only a month before she had cheerfully though modestly remarked, that "if" they were accepted, and "if" they were sold, she would have fifty dollars; and that she had gazed on them affectionately in consequence. But the New York "committee" had been singularly obtuse, and her poor little sketches had come flying back before

she even knew that they had not been accepted. Pen only laughed.

"Never mind. You can use them some time. It was plucky in you to do them and send them. Come out and take a walk, won't you?"

René put up her money and stood the packing-box out in the hall.

"If I had been at home," she said, "I should have had to carry that down-stairs. There are some conveniences about boarding after all. Where do you want to go?"

Pen opened her mouth to say "anywhere," when a little gleam on the front of her dress caught her eye.

"There, René! now I call this mean! The cloth has worn off this button, and I believe it is beginning to wear on the next one. I wish tin buttons were the style. I don't see why they have to wear out so quick, any way. Evidently I must get some more buttons. I'll go to Johnson & Purdon's."

Pen put some coal on the fire and placed

her books in order. René picked up her drawing materials and laid them on the window-seat. They did not belong on the window-seat, but they looked rather better there than on the floor. She lowered one of the windows, and they started out.

"Has any thing happened in college lately?"

"Not a thing, of course, or you should have heard it."

"You have n't told me an adventure for a long time. Have n't you had a single one?"

Among her friends Pen had a reputation for adventures. When she began in solemn tones, "I had the most remarkable adventure," silence fell on her listeners, and her adventure was detailed to the bitter end. Pen had indulged in adventures from her earliest youth, and her skill in recounting them had cost her conscientious mother and ministerial father many fears as to her devotion to strict truth. But in some way she had won and preserved a reputation for

veracity, and had not fallen off from her early habit of telling remarkable stories.

“Not a single one! Every thing is in a state of stagnation! So early in the year, too! Lots of things happen, you know, but they are always the same kind of things. Do you know what I have been thinking? I have been thinking that, just for the sake of seeing what would happen, I would answer some of those fine advertisements you see. I always need money, and these advertisements offer such wonderful inducements! You know the kind I mean, don’t you? They read this way:—

An easy way to make a living. No agents. Ladies can do the work quite easily at home. From twelve to fifteen dollars a week to be made! Address, etc.

Now how well that sounds!”

“If you did, it would be just like you! Don’t forget that photograph-painting hoax you led me into last year, and that awful place on Eliot Street! And it cost me a dollar, and I never made a cent!”

The girls both laughed at the recollection.

It seemed to Pen that she could see René working diligently with photographs, glasses, paraffine, and emery paper, for several evenings.

“Well, I must get up some scheme. Since I gave up learning to play the violin, and that was as much as two weeks ago, I have n’t had an exciting thing happen to me. Why, I never was so long in my life without an adventure!” in a grieved tone.

It was hard to get through the door at Johnson & Purdon’s, there was such a crush and hurry of people moving in and out. The air was hot and rather close inside, and there was a bewildering commingling of odors — the distinguishable ones being of perfumery, candy, and rubber goods. A circular counter opposite the entrance was loaded with cheap suits for little boys, ticketed in a variety of ways. Women were examining suit after suit, critically and suspiciously. The cloth was pulled, the threads picked at, the linings inspected. Great labels mounted guard over different piles. The legend on

every card wound up with the words, "As ADVERTISED."

Above the steady murmur, caused by the constant moving and talking among the customers, an unceasing cry rang through the store: "CASH!" "CASH!" "CASH!"

"CASH" in each case proved to be a little girl in every stage of hurry. One cash girl, with her hair braided in two little tails, dawdled along examining with her grimy little fingers the newly purchased article in her basket. Another, much more alert, ran to the relief of a clerk who had called "CASH" for the fifth time. Two, running from opposite directions, collided, and parted with mutual recrimination and backward angry glances. It seemed as though the cash girl was made in every size and with every sort of total effect. They darted in and out among the men, women, and children, in the crowded store, with great skill and generally with unerring judgment.

Pen bought her buttons.

"CASH!" screamed the clerk, a tired-

looking girl, with pretty hair and a cough. The "CASH! here CASH!" she repeated, and the magic words brought a very small girl not more than eight or nine years old. She was not quite so well dressed as the cash girls usually were. She was rather thin, and she did not seem yet to have acquired that happy-go-lucky, independent, jocular, and half-impudent air of the ordinary cash girl. Her shoes were out at the sides, and she put the buttons and the money into her basket with something like a look of apology.

When she returned and called out "Sixty-nine" in a shrill voice, Pen asked her what her name was.

"Minnie Lee;" and off she ran to answer another "CASH!"

"Poor little soul!" said René as they went out, "how that child did look!"

"There must be a good many of those children in the store," said Pen; "I wonder where they all live, and what will become of them. They don't have much chance, do they, René?" she went on slowly. "I

wonder what you and I would have become in some of those girls' places. I know I would n't have been worth much."

"Perhaps you would n't, but I can't say that I see the use of your stopping in the street while you think about it."

They walked most of the afternoon, but no matter what they looked at, or what they were talking about, Pen would think of the pale-faced little Minnie Lee. It was all well enough that the child should do something for her living, but the dark, half-frightened eyes had made an impression on Pen, and she kept wondering who she was, and where she lived, and who the other little cash girls were.

They walked until they saw the lights that had been gradually lighted reflected in the river. Looking behind them they could see a hill in the distance dark against the pale sunset glow in the sky. The long rows of houses opposite them, apparently rising out of the water, looked almost mysterious; little anchored sail-boats rocked easily on the

incoming tide, and it was yet light enough to see the long reflections of the masts; ahead of them the city houses rose, roof above roof, to the State House dome, which still caught a bright gleam from the western sky. On the other side, in the distance, the bridges and the shipping were growing every minute fainter. The street-cars and heavy drays rattled over the bridge, and the sidewalks were covered with people hurrying back to their homes in Cambridge after their day's work in the city.

The girls had grown silent, and Pen was thinking of her own childhood. Very few children had been so fortunate as she had been, perhaps. She could remember day after day that stood out in her mind clearly as particularly happy days, and she could remember very little but kindness, consideration, attention. For the first time it seemed to her a little odd that it should have been so. In the light of the thoughts that the little cash girl's face had roused in her, it seemed strange that she, Penelope Randolph,

should have been the demanding, imperious object of so many persons' solicitations and care; that she should have had every thing done for her that could please her and with the object of pleasing her; that she should have been prepared in every possible way, physically, mentally, and morally to grasp with life — to meet its problems and to live. And it seemed hard that this other child, this timid, dark-eyed little Minnie Lee, should show so plainly that so far she had struggled unhelped; that by others her fortune had been made even harder for her than it might have been. There had been something unfair somewhere. She, Pen, the fortunate one, ought in some way to lend a helping hand to the little girl, to help her, to pass on to her something of what she herself had received from others.

But how could it be done? Minnie Lee was not the only one. There were other children. But should she excuse herself from doing a little because she could not do much? After all, what could she do?

They reached the end of the bridge and walked up the noisy, swarming, not over-clean Cambridge Street. Pen thought she had never noticed the children as she did to-night. Before, it had seemed natural enough to her that children, hardly out of baby clothes, should run, none too warmly clad, in the streets in the gas-light, almost under the feet of the horses, darting into dark alleys, hanging around the doors of liquor saloons, screaming and laughing and fighting, — it had seemed natural because she was accustomed to it. But to-night it seemed dreadful. It seemed to mean so much neglect. It seemed to give so little good promise for the future. It seemed to tell of so much coming wrong. She tried to shake it off by saying it was all well enough — why should n't they play in the street?

“Pen, do look at that poor little thing; is n't she pretty?”

A bare-headed, curly-haired little child stood on the curb-stone, watching two older boys quarrel over a stick.

René was right: she was pretty. Her shoes were not mates, and her mite of an apron was torn. Pen had a feeling, an angry, rebellious sort of a feeling, against somebody or something, she did not know who or what. It seemed as though that little girl could have a very small chance of growing up to be either good or happy, and it must be somebody's fault. And Pen felt restless and dissatisfied, as though she herself might be to blame. It might be that she could do something which might be of use in the life of some such child, and it might be that for lack of effort on her part some little girl might lead a worse and more miserable life.

"Pen, what is the matter with you?" said René, that evening, as they sat before their cheerful open fire. "You have hardly said a word for ever so long. You have n't been reading, either, for I have watched you, and you have hardly turned a page."

Pen smiled, but the smile died away in rather a melancholy manner.

“ I — René — I — the fact is, I believe I am getting an idea ! ”

So René, who was used to her friend, let her alone, and Pen sat in a state of meditative silence the greater part of the evening.

CHAPTER II.

A CHALK-TALK.

PEN, you will come out home with me, won't you, to-morrow afternoon? We will come in early on Monday. I have asked you every Friday now for three Fridays, have n't I?"

"And I have wanted to go. I'll go. What time does the train start? 4.15?"

"I am so glad you are coming. We will go down together from here, or I'll come over to your room for you."

They were in the gymnasium. Pen was reaching up to one of the rings, wondering if her dress-sleeves were too tight to make a swing safe, and listening to her friend's invitation. Margie was seated on the arm of the sofa, though why she should have preferred the arm to any other part she could hardly have told. She was eating

crackers and discoursing on the subject of Pen's going to Lowell. There was a fluctuating noise in the hall, due to the girls hurrying up and down stairs, or to the murmur of voices further up by the chapel door.

"Lowell is a horrid place, I think," continued Margie, placidly. "It's all chimneys. Never saw such a place for chimneys! When we have friends come to visit us they always go through the factories, and the boys like to take them, but I don't like to go. I don't like the noise of the factories, and — oh, well — there are no hills around Lowell. I don't think there are, but people that always live there think they have beautiful hills. There is one hill that gives you something of an outlook, over the chimneys. We will walk up there."

Pen had decided that a swing through the rings in an ordinary dress would be decidedly dangerous, and had seated herself on the opposite arm of the sofa. She had never been to Lowell. All she knew about

the place she could refer to a faintly remembered half-page in a little geography she used to have.

But Margie branched off to another subject.

"You never saw any of my family, did you? Oh, yes, you met my father the other day. I have talked so much about you, they all wanted to know you. My brothers are the largest part of the family. How old are they? Ted is eight and Louis is ten and Rob is fourteen. I am not going to tell you a word about them. I want you to see them yourself. I am so sorry Ted has had his curls cut off. He had the loveliest long curls,—great loose, round ones,—and they were so bright in the sunlight. We kept them on just as long as we could, but he used to cry about them in the summer, they were so hot. I expect they were uncomfortable, and he was always having to be hunted up to have his hair combed; so finally they were cut off. He was delighted, but when I first saw him I nearly

cried, and mamma did quite ; she sat down and rocked him and cried."

Pen looked interested.

" Did you sell them ? "

" Sell what ? "

" The curls. "

Margie laughed.

" You will see them. If Ted likes you he will offer to show you his curls. Each curl is tied with a bit of white ribbon, and they are all framed. "

" A frame for each one ? "

" No, all together. It always makes me think of a funeral or something. The boy next younger than I am, Rufus — he would have been sixteen now — died when he was little ; and he has a curl — I mean my mother has one of his curls in a glass box in her top drawer. That always seemed very mysterious to me. "

Pen meditated. She looked at Margie.

" I am afraid they won't like me. I'm not used to children, you know, and if Ted did n't offer to show me his curls " —

"*Like* you! You see. They will like you fast enough. I am so glad you are coming. I think you will be inveigled into doing something down there for my mother."

She waited a moment to see how this news might affect Pen.

"I expect I would be glad to."

One of Pen's chief characteristics was a natural aptitude for adapting herself to circumstances.

"What kind of a rumpus is it?"

Pen's friends were always obliged to regret her lack of elegance of expression.

"It is n't a — that kind of a thing, Pen," reprovingly, "but I'll tell you about it. You are just the one. I know you will be wanted. It will be Saturday night."

"Is n't 'it' a little vague?" suggested Pen.

"Well, I'm telling you. Only I'll have to begin ever so far back, and I don't want you not to like it."

"Oh, I will like it; fire away—I should say, continue."

"You know there are a great many factory girls in Lowell, a very great many," began Margie, rolling up her empty cracker-bag and throwing it with pretty fair aim into the waste-basket.

"They used to be mostly American girls of decent families; very enterprising girls, I guess; kept up a newspaper at one time. But now there are a great many foreign and half-foreign girls, and they are a different kind, and the style, tone, character of the general mass of the factory girls is n't very promising. There are a great many girls that are hard cases. Then there are a great many more who are really nice girls, or would be, if they had any encouragement; but their surroundings and companions are rather too much for them. Then there are quite young or quite inexperienced girls who come in from quiet country homes, and either feel very wretched and out of place or else become used to things and grow demoralized before they know it. Then there are others, sterling, first-class girls, who do not have a very pleasant time."

There was no question about Pen's interest; she seemed wide-awake and ready to inwardly digest Margie's suggestive remarks.

"Pen, I believe you are real interested!"

Margie was gratified.

"Go on."

"Well, some ladies in our church, my mother among them, were very much interested in these various questions, and they decided to at least try to do something. They began in a rather small way, and the undertaking has grown, though it does n't amount to very much yet."

"What did they do?"

"This is the way it is now. They hire two rooms. The rooms open into each other and are large. These rooms are kept open every night in the week, and they are warmed of course. You have no idea how comfortable and pretty they are. They are nicely carpeted, and they have good pictures on the walls; all that were bought are photographs of good pictures, and they always

are nice, don't you think so? or don't you, if you can't see the real things?"

"I think they are fine. I buy one whenever I can afford it."

"Good! So do I; we will talk that over."

"Go on."

"There are two large tables, one in each room. One is kept supplied with papers and magazines. All the Lowell dailies are there and one Boston daily, all donated. Two ladies send over their magazines as soon as they have read them, and I think they must get some more in some way. I know I always see a good many. Then there is a little book-case stocked with first-class standard books. I want you to look at that case. Some of the books have been given just because the givers did n't want them, and they are not worth much perhaps; but it is a good collection, take the books all through."

"That is immense!"

"No, not so very. I said it was a small case, did n't I?"

Pen laughed good-naturedly.

"The other large table is fitted up with pens and ink-bottles and such things; it is very convenient. Then there is a sewing-machine. Of course one sewing-machine does n't amount to very much among so many, but they think every thing of it, and it is something. A lady goes one night in the week and shows them how to use it, and how to do different kinds of sewing. Then there is a piano, a tolerably good one, too."

"Can any one go there?"

"Yes, any one of the factory girls can go there. It is only open in the evenings, and they can stay and read, and any girl can of course bring a friend. But to have a right to go there regularly, and use the machine and piano, they have to pay a weekly subscription—just a very small one. They like it so much better that way. Then they feel as though they had a right to the rooms, and they take an interest in all the things, and are more careful."

"How many girls go there?"

“Oh, I don't know. You will have to talk to my mother. Of course not very many. Two rooms would n't accommodate many in comparison with the numbers of factory girls. But it is some help. Some of the girls I have seen in the reading-room are so nice — such intelligent-looking girls.”

“What kind of a thing is it your mother is likely to want me to do? I would like a chance to see the rooms, and the girls too, if they would be friendly.”

“They 'll be friendly enough. Every Saturday evening the ladies give some kind of a little entertainment. Some one sings, and some one reads, and I don't know what else they do have. I read there a couple of times. Now, you can draw, and I know mamma will want you to give a chalk-talk.”

Pen managed to preserve her equilibrium and her equanimity.

“A what? Never heard of it!”

“A chalk-talk! It is easy enough if you can draw. Draw any thing and talk about it. Be amusing.”

“Be a clown!”

“They would think you were the funniest person they ever heard of, if you started off as you do here sometimes. Give them an adventure.”

“Can’t; they are only for my most intimate friends. I’ll do something though. Will there be many there?” anxiously.

“You know very well that you would n’t care how many there were there. The more the better, I do believe. The rooms will probably be full.”

Pen looked at her watch. There was not much more time for conversation.

“I am so glad you are coming,” said Margie, as they parted at the stairs. “I will call at your room to-morrow about ten minutes before four.”

When Margie and her friend stepped off the car-steps in the Lowell station the next day they experienced a violent shock. It was caused by sudden contact with a small boy. The small boy was Ted. He breathlessly but cheerfully announced his presence.

"Holloa, Margie! How you do run into a fellow! Thought you'd never come!"

"This is Ted, Pen. Ted, this is Miss Randolph. Can't you shake hands?"

He promptly put out a hand, and Pen took a good look at the round, jolly little face with its frame of curly yellow hair. His hair certainly had not been shingled tight to his head.

"Ted, where are Louis and Rob; did n't they come down?"

"Louis is outside, and Rob — Rob is further off yet. They did n't come on account of the girl!"

He was certainly frank enough.

Louis came up with an abashed smile and was duly introduced. Rob was standing out on the sidewalk, and endeavored to appear very much surprised that the train had come in. He was as tall as his sister and a very good-looking boy.

Pen managed to drop behind with Ted. She did n't know exactly how to begin her part of the conversation.

"Expect it will snow soon. Got a sled, Ted?"

"Just ain't I — a buster!"

"Where do you slide?"

"Down Tiffany's Hill. We say coast."

"Coast, yes. I'll say coast too. Do you speak of a traverse, a double runner, or a bob?"

"Double runner, to be sure! Rob and Louis have one. I say, can you skate?"

"Yes, I've skated ever since I was smaller than you are."

"I'm a skater!" with importance. He had been on skates just three times. "I shall learn skating like every thing this winter. I say, do you suppose you could come out here when the river freezes, and skate with me all day? Will you? I expect mother'd have chicken or turkey or any thing you say for dinner, if you would. She's got oysters for to-night."

"Oh, I'll come, any way," said Pen, laughing; but her soul did not refuse to rejoice at the thought of the oysters. The weather

was cold and she was hungry, as usual. She felt at home the minute Margie called back, "Here we are, and there's mamma!"

Margie ran on, and Ted announced decidedly to his brothers:—

"She's all right! Coasts and skates, and ain't afraid of a gun, and likes oysters and turkey, and"—

"Come off, Ted!" said Rob, in an authoritative way, while Louis chuckled convulsively.

"Don't you let him bother you, Miss Randolph."

"Bother me, no indeed; I am only too thankful for his information and attention."

Ted straightened himself up.

Pen enjoyed her whole visit with Margie, but she enjoyed that first evening particularly. She was ready for a change from boarding-house fare and way of living, and the Harding's home was so thoroughly home-like.

Ted was very friendly.

"I say," he struck in, the first time he had a chance during the evening, "I've got

something to show you! I've got to go to bed in a minute, and I'll show you right away. You sit square there till I get back, won't you?"

He clattered up-stairs and clattered back, with a thing like a picture-frame. It was his curls. Six curls there were. He stood with a pleased smile on his face while Pen admired them.

When he carried them away Pen turned to Mrs. Harding.

"Do you know, I feel perfectly easy now. Margie said that if Ted liked me he would offer to show me his curls, and if he had n't offered, I believe I would have been positively miserable."

"He won't talk about any one else for days now; you see," said Rob.

Ted waited for Pen very impatiently the next morning. He had something on his mind and he wished to continue the conversation of the evening before.

"Do you like to fish?" he began at the breakfast-table.

"Yes, I like to fish."

"Could you fish all day?"

"I guess so."

"Could you fish all day in the sun?"

"Should n't wonder."

"Could you fish all day in the sun without a bite?"

"I think I might have to, if I tried it."

"Could you fish all day in the sun without a bite and without any thing to eat?"

"I believe I could."

He waited a moment and eyed her solemnly. Louis, as usual, was laughing; Rob was examining Pen with interest; Mr. and Mrs. Harding looked with open admiration at their youngest; Margie smiled appreciatively, and Pen inwardly quaked.

"Miss Randolph, could you fish all day in the sun without a bite and without any thing to eat and like it?"

"Yes." She thought there was a bare possibility that she could.

Ted sank back in his chair.

"Mamma, why can't she come and live

with us, and won't you buy her the puppy if she does?"

They spent the day walking around Lowell. Pen was very fond of walking and Margie was an unusually good walker. They passed the building where the reading-room was, and Pen wondered vaguely what she should do that evening.

Ted at the supper-table announced that he was to go "to the show" that evening with his mother, "on account of Miss Randolph"; and he did go. He walked beside Pen with his curious little airs and graces, varied by sudden desires to walk on fence copings or on the edge of the curb-stone. He was a very prominent figure in the room during the evening; he sat by his mother, and when it was Pen's turn to hold forth, she seemed at first only able to see that one yellow head and smiling face.

The rooms were all that Margie had described them, and every chair was taken. The girls seemed very quiet, and when Pen heard them talking in whispers among them-

selves before the entertainment began, she resolved to be "funny" if she could, when it should be her turn. There was some singing and reading.

"Miss Randolph, a friend we have with us, will give us a chalk-talk."

Poor Miss Randolph! she felt as though she was expected to be an Artemus Ward.

"Be just as much of a fool as you can," she said to herself, "and let it go at that."

She tried to do something that she had once seen done. She invited the girl nearest her, an awkward-looking girl with a wide mouth and a pleasant smile, to make any kind of a line on the blackboard that she chose, provided that the line did not cross itself. The girl made a meaningless, wandering curve, and retired to her seat amid some laughing.

"Now," said Pen, "you may have the fun of seeing me fail completely. What I profess to be able to do is to make a picture, an interesting picture, a picture that is worth looking at, out of any kind of

a line that any of you will make for me. I want any one near enough the blackboard to try me."

Then she proceeded to make a picture out of the line before her. She talked in an interjectional style as she tried, and the girls seemed to think it quite irresistible. They craned their necks to see her motions. She finally made a donkey, a wretched, dispirited, dejected donkey, and it was received with shouts of laughter.

She kept up the performance till she was afraid it would wear off, though they begged her to go on. She sat down, but not before she had picked out certain girls whose faces she liked, whom she meant to speak to when the meeting closed. Quite a number of them gathered around the blackboard, and they talked and laughed until nearly all the others were gone.

"We have enjoyed it so much, Miss Randolph," said one; "I hope you will come to Lowell again."

"You have n't enjoyed it any more than I

have. I am so glad to have had the opportunity to meet you all."

They shook hands all around and parted quite like friends.

"You made a success of that, Miss Randolph. I am so pleased!" said Mrs. Harding.

"So am I," was the answer. "What nice girls they do seem to be! I like girls. What a pity they all could n't have some place like that to go. It is just fine!"

"I knew you would like it, Pen."

Ted doubled himself up like a jackknife every few minutes in his excess of joy.

"Was n't that funny? I most died a-laughing over that little pig! When did you say you were coming to live with us, Miss Randolph?"

But Pen had been thinking more seriously than one would have supposed; her idea was taking shape in her mind. She was very glad to have seen this Lowell undertaking; she was very glad to talk about it and find out what she could about it; but all the time

she was wondering what she could do, and if it would ever amount to any thing if she did make a plan; and if she was of any use or ever would be; and if she had the push to think a thing out in her own head and then work it out practically; and whether after all she would try to excuse herself because she was busy or had no money, and not many friends.

“In fact,” as she kept saying to herself in one form or another all that evening, and the next day while she was talking to Margie or the boys, while she was listening to Ted, while she was reading, and in between the hymns and during the collection in church, and even during the sermon, — “In fact, I wonder whether I shall just think of this and think of it, and then let it fall through — drop — and excuse myself, or not even take that trouble, but simply think of it as a whim; or shall I do something, however small, try in every way in my power to do what I think I ought. I know I shall succeed to a certain degree if I try my best,

Shall I try or shall I not? Shall I decide, and bind myself to myself, or shall I let it drop?"

And before the day closed she felt, half-distrustfully, as though she would at least try to do what she could.

CHAPTER III.

ONLY A PLAN.

RENÉ, I should think I might do something myself."

Pen was sitting by their open fire ; she had shut her book and had been staring into the red coals in meditative silence. René was drawing. In spite of many previous failures, she was still persistent. The small scene she was at work on now she felt sure some one would take.

"Well, try it, if you think so, but I would like to know what you can do. You have n't any money to spend ; you have n't very much time, and you don't know any body worth knowing — do you?"

"As long as I know you, René," was the grave reply, " may I never hear you express a sentiment like that last !"

"Stuff! You know what I mean. You

have n't actually said what you were thinking about, but I suppose it is still those little cash girls. That infant, — Miranda, Mabel, Minnie, — what was her name? — Minnie Lee, seemed to start you, and since you went to Lowell your head has been completely turned. What would you like to do, any way, just supposing you could?"

"I don't know, René. I don't know enough to know, but I know things do start in some way, generally in a small way. Orphan asylums, and "homes," and all kinds of charities, and wars. I believe every thing starts in some ridiculously small way. Now don't laugh. And as I am interested, only for the moment, if you like, but at any rate interested now, in these girls, why should n't I start something? Perhaps it is moony; I don't pretend to say it is n't; but just look at the case. In that one store, Johnson and Purdon's, there are ever so many girl clerks and little cash girls. Now I don't feel equal to the clerks. But you know very well many of them are not in what you would consider

a promising situation. They don't get paid very much; their wages are miserable — you know that. It is all well enough, perhaps, for girls who live at home and can keep what they earn in a week; that is, can use it for their clothes and ordinary expenses. But so many of those girls have no homes; you know that is so. Out of very small weekly wages they must pay for their board and buy their clothes. They are obliged to look pretty well, or they will be turned off. Their shoes are often in a wretched condition; have n't you noticed that? They have to board in very poor places or else their living will be too expensive. Ten to one their rooms are not heated, and you know what this winter weather is like. They must go somewhere in the evening to be warm, and they are on the streets, and they go to cheap, warm saloons. You know all that, and it is n't a pleasant way to live, and it does n't give them any kind of a chance, does it? Well, that is all so, but I have not been thinking of those girls; I have been thinking of

those little cash girls. A good many of them live at home, but often those homes are of the worst kind. The youngsters may have very little idea, from any thing they have seen at home, of what are the correct things to do, or of the way to live and act and think, to grow into decent women. Some of those little cash girls even have no homes; they live with relatives or board. And they are just at an age to be especially influenced by all they see and hear. If they hear the older girls telling what splendid times they had the night before on the street or in a saloon, or with such and such fellows, what effect do you suppose it will have on them? And many a little girl in that store now, to-day, may be a good-hearted, kindly, well-meaning child, willing enough to do what she knows or thinks would be right, and glad to learn things, and to be taught, and just at the age to be so influenced that she will do her very best to grow into an honest, good woman. And next year, or the year after, she may have received that kind of a bent,

from one thing and another, that will prevent her from even desiring to be any thing different from what she may then have become. And it is a pity—it is a shame to decent people, to thoughtful people, to Christian people—to let such things go by and not care. And it would be much more a shame to one who has thought about it and knows; it would be a shame to me to let it all go—to just say to myself what I have said over and over these last few days: ‘Oh, well, it is all right; it always has been so, and they earn their living, and they get along some way, and why should you interfere?’ Now, René, be good and help me. I want to do something. You just expect something of me, and act as though you did. You’re such a good girl, René. You’re twice as kind-hearted as I am.”

“O Pen, now don’t. Of course I’ll do all or any thing you want me to, but much good I’ll be! I do know very well, though, that if you actually set your mind on any thing something will come of it. What do

you think of that?" and she handed over her sketch.

Pen was supposed to be quite a critic, and she enjoyed her office.

"First-rate; that will be taken sure. That off child is a little bit cross-eyed, don't you think so? René, I'm no end obliged to you. Now I've made a splurge this way, and have said my say, I feel as though I could n't entirely back out. I'm just as much in the dark as a human being could be though! Nine o'clock, as I live! I sha'n't read any more to-night. Let's have some of those sardines, won't you? I'll toast some bread."

It was the order of the day to have refreshment about nine o'clock.

"To make things slip along easily, and to keep us good-tempered. There is nothing like eating, after all!" as Pen put it.

The bread was toasted, the sardines laid out, and the lemonade made. Pen leaned back in her chair, ate, meditated, and drank—drank, meditated, and ate; but she meditated. She was growing tired of thinking without coming to any conclusion.

René was thinking also. She was thinking about Pen. She liked Pen; she admired her. Pen was a constant source of interest to her. She was amusing and bewildering, and always saying or doing the unexpected. She had never known her to seem so much in earnest over any thing as over this whimsical, airy plan. René sympathized with the feeling, and believed in the theory of all that Pen had said—but practically! “She can’t do any thing. She will forget all about it, any way. She never sticks to any thing very long; I doubt if she believes in it.” She looked around the room. There was a row of crayon heads—red crayon on yellow paper. Pen had decided to really do something from life; to try and learn a little about various positions of the head, and had worked vigorously in her spare minutes over red crayon heads of the patient René. But there they hung. The last one had been tacked up over three weeks ago, and Pen had apparently forgotten the existence of red crayon and yellow paper.

Over the sofa hung a violin and bow. Pen was very fond of violin music; she liked it better than any other kind. She did n't know a thing about music — could n't play a scale on a piano, but she had decided to learn to play a violin. She had bought a violin, if it could be called that. It had cost just two dollars. She had invested in a "Violin Instructor," and had spent her spare moments in studying out the scales, the notes, the way to hold the bow, and had made herself almost unendurable by drawing her bow from end to end over the screeching strings, declaring enthusiastically that that was "the way the book said." But that had come to a timely end; the violin hung untouched, with the exception that Pen occasionally kneeled on the sofa and pulled the strings with her fingers to hear the sound.

Pen could plan nice little stories, short stories. René was outspoken in her admiration of them, but Pen would never write down more than a page of any one of them. And Pen changed every day. She

was a queer girl; every body said she was a queer girl. René was acquainted with all Pen's particular friends in the college — their room had grown to be quite a resort — and she knew quite well that any one of them would say: "Pen? Oh, yes, Pen! But Pen is different; you can't gauge her by other people." She thought she knew Pen better than any one else, but that was all she could say—"Pen is different." Almost involuntarily, as her thoughts and her toast reached a simultaneous limit, she said:—

"Pen, you don't stick to things very well, do you?"

"No, ma'am!" was the prompt reply, "not very often; may get into trouble by it too, if I'm not careful, but I have n't yet, I don't believe. What is the use of sticking to a thing after you have got all the good out of it you were aiming for? What is the use of sticking to a thing after you have discovered you were a fool to try it, or that it has ceased to be useful, or even though good in itself that you are not in a posi-

tion to be benefited by it? It is n't a bad thing to learn, is it — to drop a thing at the right time? But I don't know but that your thought is quite right on the whole. I think of it myself sometimes. I'd better not be too confident. That is one of the best things about you, René — your perseverance, your stick-to-it-iveness. You are one of the thorough kind. It will make you successful sooner or later. Well, we'll see."

And her thinking went on.

"Don't you be too sure, Pen, my dear" — Pen had a way of talking in her thoughts to herself; she felt half-ashamed of it sometimes — "you have a mean way of going into a thing yourself. You can't afford to do that; there is n't enough to you. 'Lo, I am with you alway,' that is what you want to remember. It may all come to nothing; there may be half a dozen screws loose somewhere, and you may be all wrong yourself, but nothing will be half so bad if you remember that, nothing! And you are so backward! What does make it so hard

for you to say what you think? Why is it you would just as soon act like an idiot or a crank, and make every one think you are simply a — oh, a wag, and wouldn't just as soon have any body know what is really you, what you really think, and what you really care for? Reform, Pen, my dear!"

It was with some such ideas that she went the next noon into the college prayer-meeting. She always attended this prayer-meeting, which came one noon a week. It was an earnest, thoughtful little meeting generally, and always made her feel better, but she rarely took any part herself. As she went in to-day she saw that "Little Harkness" was leading it. Every body called him "Little Harkness." He did not look old enough to be in college, and was made much of accordingly. Little Harkness opened the meeting with a few words; they sang, some one made a few remarks, another offered a prayer, and then Pen, rather filled with her thoughts than with an active idea of what she was doing, rose to her feet.

"I would like to say a few words," she said. "I have had some occasion to do a little thinking on my own account this last week, and it seems to me to be in keeping with this noon's subject. We would not learn much Greek, would we, by saying that we liked Greek, or even by feeling strongly on the subject, and by resolving to read all sorts of Greek poets and plays after we are out of college? We shall not grow much in Christian life, real life, by merely saying that we believe in it, or by resolving to do active service when we have a chance later on, shall we? I don't feel that I know much about this; I am only saying what I have been thinking. We come here every week, and we feel better for coming; I know I do; and it is a good thing. I feel that, but once this half-hour is over, I am taken up with the general round of work again, and possibly what we have said and agreed upon here comes but comparatively few times into my mind. And I feel that there is great lack of *doing*. We are all ready to work; is n't

that so? But we do very little. I know it is the common thing to say, 'Do what you have to do every day, do it earnestly and prayerfully and thoroughly, and in that way you live a Christian life and grow.' I hope we do. I think that would be all very well if that were really all we could do. But I know, I am convinced, that our work, what we should and could do, is not bounded by the range of college duties and home life for those of us who are at home. It can not be so. All that work, necessary though it is, chief and first though it is, is in the end for ourselves, and I know our work is also needed for others. We are in a great city. There is much, so very, very much that needs to be done, and that is not done. And I say what right have we to think that we are exempt? Why should we excuse ourselves? As long as work is to be done, somebody is bound to do it. And we shirk if we say that we alone owe nothing. This is not meant to be vapory. I hope, I beg you will not think I am simply trying to

re-air a truism. I know I am in earnest and mean something. There is work to do right here in this city that we could find time to do, and could do. One trouble with us, I think, is that we have not learned the value of our energy. We have spent our energies since we were children, most of us, on things that those older called childish or young, and smiled at. And we do not realize that it is the same kind of energy that makes things move on, that does every thing that is done. We have energy, plenty of it. All of you know the active work that goes into things right around us, in our societies, in our entertainments, in our paper, in our receptions; why not consolidate, and plan and think and try to do something that will be an active outside growing interest; that will tell on the lives of some of the people around us in this city? I know that sounds pretentious; I know I have not said what I have been trying to say; but I do mean that it is for us to do something now, not next year, now, worthy of our profession,

and that will give us a Christian interest in something and somebody outside of ourselves."

She felt half discouraged and disappointed when she sat down ; she knew how little she had said what she meant, and how trite it all sounded, and she wondered what she would have thought if she had heard any one else say what she had said.

Finally the meeting closed. It had been a hearty, inspiring meeting, better than usual, and as there was the rustle of breaking up, Pen could hear more than one girl near her say, " Glad I came in to-day."

" Miss Randolph," said a low voice beside her, " I am so glad you said what you did. I don't know when any thing has hit me so square. I have been thinking what you said myself. And I have been trying to talk up something of the kind among the fellows."

It was Rodney Hoare. She held out her hand with a smile.

" You can't imagine how grateful I feel to you. For I really am in earnest and do

mean it, and I know how stupid what I said sounded. We will talk about it, won't we, soon, if you are interested?"

A few minutes later she was in the gymnasium, several of the girls were around her, some of them eating their luncheons.

"What started you up, Pen? What have you been thinking about? What you said was first-rate, any way."

"Well, I'll tell you." She was sitting on the rowing-machine.

"I meant what I said, that we ought to do something. It would make every one of us twice what we are; just on that ground it would n't hurt us. Then I think we ought to do something because there is so much to be done. And I happened to be thinking of one particular kind of thing. I have been thinking that it would be only fair for us, who are girls and have had a fair chance in life and lots done for us, to turn around and lend a hand to those poor little cash girls. We see them every day of our lives, and you have only to look at some of them to

know a good deal. And yet we do nothing. We do not even think of doing any thing, perhaps. It is just small of us!"

"You begin and I'll join in."

"So will I."

"Pen, you're a crank!"

"What put it into your head, any way?"

"What could we do?"

"I think you are quite right about it!"

"What do you propose?"

Pen laughed. "Girls, I had an adventure."

"When?"

"Last Saturday night."

Margie came in just then and heard the last remark. "Pen, are you going to get that off?" and she seated herself to hear the story.

So Pen launched forth. She did her best; she told all about the work and the rooms and the girls. She arrayed her part of that memorable Saturday evening performance in such a garb that Margie herself laughed until she nearly cried.

The girls were all interested.

“Well, that makes me feel good ! I like to hear of something like that being done !” said Miss Trevor. “Pen, you are just the one to go ahead in this thing, and we will all back you up, whatever you do ; is n’t that so, girls ?”

“Yes, it is !” “Yes, I will, with all my heart !” “You can count on me !” were the various expressions that gratified Pen.

“I’ll tell you what it is, girls. I am as much or more in the dark than any one of you ; I feel that way. But you have no idea how much clearer and more reasonable it makes this seem to talk about it. You may think I have some plan, but I haven’t. I want to know what you think about it. I suppose the general end we would aim at, all of us, just now at least, would be to have a nice, pleasant place where these girls could go evenings, a few of them, and we would try to get acquainted with them, and do things for them as we knew better what was wanted. But what are we to do now ? We certainly have

no money, at least none that would amount to any thing, for hiring a room. That is out of the question for right off, is n't it?"

There was a look of sober assent on the faces of most of the girls.

"I suppose the proper thing would be to get acquainted with some of the little girls—at first with two or three—and they could give us ideas, perhaps, and could tell us about the others, and so on. But we ought to begin while we are interested."

"That's so," said Margie, with a laugh.

"I will tell you," said Miss Baker, slowly. (Miss Baker was a freshman and not so very well known.) "Nan Ellis is my room-mate. Miss Brown and Miss Thomas have the room next to ours. The rooms are two parlors on the first floor around here in Allston Street, and they are very nice, large rooms. Nan and Louise Brown both go home Friday to stay over Sunday. Now if you know of any way of getting a few of those little cash girls you are talking

about together, you could tell them to come around to our rooms on a Saturday night, this Saturday if you choose. Our rooms open into each other. I am sure Miss Thomas would n't mind, and I would be glad to have them come. That may not be much good, but it would give you an opportunity to become acquainted with a few of them, as you said."

"Be sure and give them something to eat!"

"We could plan to get together enough things among us to feed them."

"My mother will make me a good big cake, and I will bring it in Friday morning when I come. It will keep all right until Saturday night," said one.

"I will bring in a loaf of bread Friday morning," volunteered another girl. "Then you can buy some ham and make sandwiches, and the cake, and you can have lemonade."

"Jean and I will get you the lemons."

"I'll get you the sugar."

"Good!" said Pen; "what a spread! That will be plenty. Let's plan to have it this Saturday night, if we may, Miss Baker?"

"I am willing, and here is Miss Thomas."

The matter was expounded to Miss Thomas, and she heartily agreed.

"Now the next thing is how to get the girls."

"You are going to have the little cash girls in Johnson & Purdon's, aren't you? Can't you ask some of them?"

"They always are so busy, and somebody might think it was queer."

"Well," said Pen, "I'm not worth much if I can't plan how to get one kid over there, any way."

"One what?"

"Cash girl. I'll think up something. Miss Baker and Miss Thomas, you are bricks, both of you! Shake hands. All you girls are."

"Pen, you are slangy. I refuse to be a brick."

"Brick is not slangy. It is classic," stoutly.

"Oh! oh!"

"It is so!"

"Prove it!"

"Well," said Pen, with a grand air, "Alexander the Great or Philip of Macedon, or somebody — now don't get fussy! You know very well you would n't know the difference between them if you should see them; but we will say Philip of Macedon for euphony's sake. Philip had a friend visiting him. Philip showed all the amusing things he had, but the friend said, 'I would like to see the wall of your city.' Now there was n't any wall worth mentioning, but Philip had had his army drawn up on the review ground before the palace; so he took his friend to the window; he raised the window" —

"Penelope Randolph!"

"I think he raised the window and stepped out on the fire-escape."

"Pen!"

"Why do you interrupt me?" in an

aggrieved tone. "I am just coming to the point. Philip pointed to the army and said, 'There is the wall of the city.' 'I don't see it,' said the friend. *He* was slangy, I'll admit. 'Yes,' said Philip, 'that army is my wall, and every man a brick!' So it's classic!"

Having thus distinguished herself she started for Johnson & Purdon's. She did n't go with any fixed intention or plan of action. But as her thoughts were in Johnson & Purdon's, her feet took the rest of her there. She looked for Minnie Lee. She saw her hurrying with her basket and then wait for change. Pen put her hand on her shoulder and smiled at her as the child looked up.

"And how do you do, Minnie Lee?"

The child smiled faintly. She looked as though she might have been crying. An older little girl standing near spoke up.

"Minnie broke a glass match-box. I tell her 'tain't no use to cry over spilt milk. It was only ten cents, any way."

Minnie looked as though she might cry again.

"Is it taken out of your wages?"

"Yes 'm."

"Of course it ought to be, I suppose."

"I don't think she minds that so much," said the other girl, rather contemptuously, "but the walker spoke cross to her. I would n't mind that!"

Minnie's change was ready and she ran off with it, but not before she smiled quite cheerfully at Pen.

"What is your name?" she asked the other little girl.

"Lucretia McKinney. I'm twelve; that other one wa'n't only nine."

"Can you go out if you like evenings?"

Miss McKinney indulged in a knowing smile. "I should like to see who'd keep me in!"

"Do you think you would like to come and spend the evening with me sometimes, if I promised you should enjoy yourself?"

There was an emphatic cry of "CASH! CASH!" and the child scampered off with the remark, "You just try it and see."



"What is your name?" asked Pen. "Lucretia McKinney; I'm twelve," answered the little girl.—Page 64.

Pen's Venture.



Pen felt as though life was opening up without much trouble.

The next time she went into the store she had two little white notes in her hand. On one envelope was written, "Miss Lucretia McKinney;" on the other, "Miss Minnie Lee."

She was barely inside the store before she felt as though she was a marked person. She heard one cash girl whisper loudly to another: —

"There she is! That's the lady Crete said!"

She saw Minnie. The child smiled as soon as she saw her, and Pen felt actually grateful.

She handed a note to her and proceeded to look for Lucretia.

Lucretia was beating a tattoo on her basket, and smiled broadly when she saw Pen. She received her note with evident surprise.

At her first opportunity she read it.

"Will you come this Saturday night, at seven o'clock, to 96 Allston Street, and ask

for Miss Baker? And will you please bring three of your friends—three other cash girls? I want you to come very much. I am sure you will have a jolly time. Be sure to come."

Minnie Lee's note was precisely the same, and great was their rejoicing. They showed their notes to the other girls, and Lucretia McKinney held her head very high when one girl after another said, "Take me, Crete! Remember what I told you last week!" "You 'd oughter take me, Crete, I give you a ribbon onct." "I know something I 'd tell you if you 'd take me!"

They also besieged poor Minnie, but her mind was made up. An ungainly girl of thirteen had once befriended her; she was to go surely. Another little girl, about her own age, was her chosen companion and she should go. Another girl called Georgie she admired from the bottom of her little heart as being the most beautiful creature ever made, and with much timidity she asked her if she too would go. Her invitation was graciously accepted.

CHAPTER IV.

LUCRETIA MCKINNEY.

LUCRETIA MCKINNEY and Minnie Lee did not look forward to seven P.M. Saturday with any more interest than did Pen, René, and the Allston-street girls. The refreshments had been carefully prepared, and the rooms had been arranged and re-arranged as many times as they would have been for a class party. There was a piano in one of the rooms, and Miss Thomas, fortunately, could both play and sing. Miss Baker said that she knew plenty of games, and if they were the kind of children that would like to play games, she would manage it. René brought over her treasure, resolved to "keep an eye" on it. It was Kaulbach's Gœthe Gallery — cabinet photographs.

When it was nearly seven, Pen remem-

bered that she had nothing with which to entertain them, and had not planned to do any thing.

She bewailed her lot in vigorous language.

The others laughed at her.

"If it was n't for you, Pen, we would n't have them near here. We regard you as our chief stay."

There was a ring at the door-bell. The girls had their door partially open, and heard a giggling inquiry for Miss Baker. Pen walked to the door in time to greet Lucretia and her cortege and escort them into the parlor. They were duly introduced. Lucretia had brought four others.

"I brought four, as I did n't see how I was to leave any one of 'em out," she said blandly.

"Will you tell us your friends' names, Lucretia?"

"This a one," pointing to a girl with such light hair and eyelashes that she looked almost like an Albino, "is Sairy. I brought Sairy because her father is a raving lunatic

to home and makes it very uncomfortable in the evenings."

Sairy looked almost rebellious, but held her peace. The reputation of having a lunatic father was not so bad as winning Lucretia's disapproval. Her father had been dead for years and she lived with her mother and older sister.

"This one," continued Lucretia, with the air of a show-woman, "is Mary Haffey. Mary makes us all die a-laughin', and I brought her for company in case it should be dull here!"

Mary blushed violently, and the other little girls smiled, not so much at the imputation of possible dullness, as because they knew Mary Haffey to be the most silent of the silent, and any thing but a wit. She was a common butt.

"These two are Murphy and Little Murphy. They are cousins. Murphy is their last name. They're both named Mary, and Mary's too common a name! There's nobody in the store, 'cept me, named Lucretia!"

They were hardly helped off with their things before the bell rang again.

"Them's the others," remarked Lucretia. "We met 'em at the corner; they'd been waitin' some time. I told Minnie to fetch 'em if she dared for ten minutes; and so I got mine in first." Her tone of calm superiority left little to be desired. Pen hurried to the door again. Minnie had brought her three.

"Please," she said timidly while they were still in the hall, "these is Georgie and Kate and Biddy," pushing forward the older girl. "Crete said you meant I wa'n't to bring but two, miss, but you said three." She seemed very anxious, and her brown eyes looked unnaturally large.

"That is quite right, dear. I am so glad you did. Come right in. You must be cold."

The four new-comers were made welcome, and the talk went on at a lively rate. Lucretia far outshone the others in magnificence of apparel. She had quantities of white cotton lace in her neck and sleeves,

a brass breastpin was conspicuous, and she wore white cotton lace mits and carried a fan.

"You have all had a long walk," said Pen, "and perhaps you would enjoy now some little refreshments we have for you."

There was no dissenting vote to that proposition, and the girls handed around the sandwiches, cake, and lemonade.

"They indulged in the pleasures of the table," as Miss Baker put it, until the last crumb and the last drop were gone. Lucretia rather led the conversation; she seemed to somewhat scandalize the other girls, but they evidently admired her. Mary Haffey, Minnie, and Biddy seemed disposed to preserve a discreet silence.

Pen and her abettors talked with a purpose; they wanted to find out something about these children. Pen found that it was time lost to ask questions of Lucretia, as her replies, if not evidently wide of the truth, were received with such looks and laughs by the other little girls that she knew something was wrong.

René was more successful with Minnie.

"How long have you been in the store, Minnie?"

"About three weeks."

"Do you like it?"

"I was frightened awful at first, but I don't mind so much now."

"Where do you live?"

"Offen Chardon Street."

"Do you live at home? Is your mother alive?"

"I live with an aunt, miss. My mother died last spring, and my aunt has other children; and she managed to get me into Johnson & Purdon's. She was right glad to do it."

"How many other children has she?"

"Three, all boys."

"Do you like them?"

She hesitated a little. "They're awful rough. They plague me."

"Is your uncle alive?"

"Yes'm. He don't like me. He don't like to see me around; but it's better now

I am in Johnson & Purdon's. I hope I'll keep my place."

"I hope so too. You're a nice little girl, and I hope I shall see you often."

The child's pale, pretty, pathetic little face and the large, half-frightened brown eyes attracted her.

"Tell me about Biddy. How old are you, Biddy?"

"Thirteen, miss."

"Biddy was right good to me when I first went to the store," said Minnie.

"Where do you live, Biddy?"

"Back of Hanover. There's just my father, miss, and he's off on the road a good bit. He's on the railroad, and he's right well thought of — when he's all right."

The reservation told quite a tale, but the girl's tone and look showed a certain heavy pride in this father of hers.

"And Kate, who is Kate?"

Kate was a good-natured, pleasant-faced little girl.

"My mother is a wash'woman, or any kind of a woman, and there's a whole lot of us. She's awful good, and Bop—you ought to see Bop! She's my little sister, and she's four years old; she has awful tight curls all over her head. I used to take care of her before I got into the store, and she cried for me like every thing. And there's Joey. He was awful thin and my mother sent him off to a farmer's where they have milk, and he gets up early and drives a milk-wagon, and he's got that fat he busts the buttons offen his clothes; my mother seen him yesterday."

Kate was a refreshing relief; she seemed so satisfied with her lot.

"I've got a sister; she works in Brown & Bates'; that's a grocery. She's awful pretty."

René thought if she looked any thing like Kate that she probably was.

"Where is your father?"

"Oh, he run off a year ago! We ain't heard nothin' of him, and I'm glad of it;

he was awful cross. He's whipped Joey fit to kill. He was allus good to me though. I'm glad he's gone, I am."

Georgie was looking at some pictures Miss Baker was showing her.

"Ain't she beautiful?" whispered Minnie. "She lives with her sister, and her sister is beautiful too. Her sister is a clerk in Johnson & Purdon's; she's been there a long time and she got Georgie in there. But her sister's got a terrible cough. She's afraid she won't be wanted there unless it gets better, Georgie says. Where she stands it's draughty."

Pen and Miss Thomas, after considerable difficulty, had at last wrested the truth out of Miss McKinney.

"Well, I'll tell you the truth now. I don't live in a junk-shop, nor in a canal-boat, nor my father ain't a rich miser, but I'm a-boardin'. That's a fact! I room with Lot Finn. She's a clerk in our store. My mother's dead and my father lives outside. He could n't do nothing with me,

and I knowed this girl, and she helped me get this place, and my father he sends me a little money sometimes. Lot Finn! She's a bad one, I can tell you," she said proudly. "She has a bully time, too!"

Pen and Miss Thomas had very nearly the same thought: if they were to get any hold on that young woman it was high time that they began.

Miss Thomas played on the piano for them. She played lively, rattling tunes that delighted them particularly. She sang for them, and sang some songs that they could join in singing.

When they had stopped singing, but were still around the piano, Pen said: —

"Some of us have been thinking a little, a very little perhaps, about a plan for something for you girls, and I would like to know what you think about it. It seemed to us that some of the cash girls at least might not have such very pleasant places to go or stay evenings, and we wondered how you would like to have a room in some convenient

locality, warmed and lighted, where you — just you cash girls — could go evenings and talk and enjoy yourselves. You might like to read, some of you, and have some books or pictures there, and it would be a pleasant place to do any sewing, if you youngsters ever have any thing of that kind to do. We don't know of any such room, and we may not be able to start such a thing, but what would you girls think of it, if it could done? Do you think you would like it? It would be your room, and would be warm and light, and with comfortable chairs."

Silent Mary Haffey, the two Murphys, and Biddy looked as though they would appreciate such a room to the fullest. Minnie put in a shy "That would be beautiful!" Georgie said, "I would like my sister to go if it was right warm."

"I don't know as I could be there much," said Lucretia, patronizingly. "I go to the Howard or such like right often; and Lot Finn is after asking me lately to go to Whaley's. It's rum there; you get awful

good beer and oysters. And there's allus a crowd there."

Kate looked rather aghast. "You'd better be at a good room," she ventured.

Lucretia looked her down, but she nodded in a friendly way to Pen. "But I'd come at times, and I think it would be a good plan if you had a piano in there, say, and no books. You'd better have no books, unless you put in 'The Bloody Hand,'—that's right good,—or 'The Secret Murder,' or 'The Sin of Lord Mortmartin.' They ain't so bad. You'd most likely put in a hymn-book, though, or summat like that."

"I'm glad you all think it would be a nice plan," said Pen, cheerfully, ignoring the last remarks.

When the little guests had departed, the girls stayed to talk the evening over. One of the pleasantest things about any kind of an entertainment, big or little, is the talking it over with some one equally interested.

"I think that was lots of fun!" said energetic Miss Thomas, "picking up" the room.

"It made me feel simply disgusted with myself. How often I have seen these children, or others like them, and positively I don't believe it ever entered my head to wonder where they lived, or who they were, or what they thought, or what would become of them. I liked that little Georgie. That child is a beauty, and did you ever hear any thing like that Crete McKinney, or whatever her name is? She is awful!"

René felt that her interest had been more engaged in behalf of Minnie Lee and the awkward Biddy.

"She is the nicest child!" she said enthusiastically, referring to Minnie.

Pen felt a secret leaning toward the obstreperous McKinney.

"What is coming next?" asked Miss Baker the practical.

"We've got to get a room, that's all," was Pen's answer. "I mean that is next; it won't be all, I hope. I have n't an idea on the subject, but with you girls to help I expect we shall think of something. I

suppose Monday the first business will be to report this evening's successes and defeats ; we had to take a good many set-backs from Lucretia, did n't we ? ”

“ She said she thought that lemonade would be better with a ‘ stick ’ in it.”

Miss Baker's innocent tone nearly convulsed poor Pen.

“ You girls must all talk of this wherever you have a chance. Don't keep it to yourselves. A constant cheerful stir about it may amount to something.”

In execution of this theory, Pen on Monday graphically described the adventures of Saturday evening to an interested and amused group of girls. They laughed aloud over Lucretia McKinney.

“ Now, girls, what is the next move ? We may consider ourselves sufficiently acquainted with the cash-girl element, in Johnson & Purdon's at least, to feel justified in positing that they ought to have a comfortable place to go in the evening.”

“ Good, Pen ! That was a remarkable sentence ! ”

"Thank you. How are we going to get this room? We can't afford to hire one ourselves now—at least I don't think so. There will be more than enough for our pockets to do after we get the room. It must be given to us in some way."

"Johnson & Purdon ought to give a room," said one girl.

"It is for their good in a kind of a way. Some men like that do a great deal for their clerks."

"You might ask them, that's a fact," said another, doubtfully.

"Ten to one you will get snubbed for your pains. There will be no such luck as getting a room."

"I've heard they were a close-fisted firm."

"Somebody would be sure to make such a remark if the firm was in reality as generous as the sun."

"Try it! There is no harm in trying. They won't insult you."

"Who will go? Pen, you will have to, of course. Who else?"

"I will," said Miss Trevor.

Gertrude Trevor was a dignified-looking girl. The girls were always proud to have her put forward as a representative. She was rather reticent and made few friends. Those who liked her rendered her a kind of homage, and could hardly say enough in her favor. Those who did not like her were apt to call her stiff and "uppish," but they felt flattered by any chance attention from her. It was not a usual thing for her to take an active part in any of the small plans or work going on around her, and her quiet "I will" was a surprise to all. Pen liked her and was quite a friend of hers, though more indifferent to her fascinations than most of the girls.

"That will be fine," she said with a smile. "I shall feel as though I were conferring a favor on the firm by letting them see you, and probably shall not succumb to that horrible sinking feeling that was just taking possession of me, when I appear before them. Now the next point is, when shall we go?"

"Are you engaged this next hour?" asked Miss Trevor, with a cool determination that sent a preceptible chill up Pen's backbone. "Because I think they are liable to be in at this hour; by 'they' I mean either Mr. Johnson or Mr. Purdon, and I suppose that one of them will be in the office. To tell the truth, I shall not have an easy minute till this business is over," she added, in a burst of confidence.

Pen advanced solemnly and shook hands.

"My sentiments exactly."

They had to endure more or less gibing and sarcasm from their interested friends before they were fairly started.

"You won't be gone long, at any rate. I shall stay to hear the adventure," said Margie.

"Miss Trevor, do I look pale?" asked Pen, anxiously, as they neared the building.

"I think — perhaps — you do," was the cautious answer. "*I* feel like a rag. Did you ever do any of this kind of work before?"

"Never!" emphatically.

How it happened they hardly knew, but altogether too soon to suit them they were ushered into the august presence of Mr. Johnson. He was a florid-faced, white-haired old gentleman, and he sat in a revolving-chair before an office desk. He was tapping on the table with a paper-cutter, and if either of the girls had retained sufficient power of observation, they might have suspected that he was not in a very good temper. A young man stood with his back to them, looking out of the window.

Pen introduced herself and friend very creditably, as she thought, and they established themselves in the offered chairs.

"You may think the business we have come on a little odd," began Pen, hesitatingly. "We — several of us — have become interested in the average home and prospects of the little girls in various stores as cash girls. Particularly so in some of the little girls in your store. Some of them seem to have no homes — that is, they do not live at home — and some of them seem to have a very

poor kind of homes. They have n't pleasant places to go in the evenings, and they run the streets, and come under bad influences and grow vicious almost before they know it. We have thought, and it does not seem very fantastic to us, that we might get a room and make it pleasant and comfortable, keep it open every evening, and get some of these girls to spend their evenings there. One room, perhaps, would not accommodate very many, but it would be something and would be a beginning. We can hardly afford to pay the room rent, and would need what money we can raise for the accessories. We want to know if you have an unrented room anywhere, that you could give us the use of, for a time at least, if we arranged about every thing else."

Mr. Johnson seemed to have listened patiently. They waited.

He tapped with his paper-cutter. "How did you happen to pick out the cash girls in my store?"

"We had become familiar with the faces

of several, and are in here often. Most of us do what little shopping we do in here."

He continued his little tattoo with his paper-cutter.

"My employees are as well paid as any in this line in the city. I do not feel called upon to supplement their wages with charity. I don't believe in it. As for the plan you suggest, it is a youthful attempt at philanthropy. I consider it unnecessary and foolish—detrimental. It would cultivate in these girls a taste for gadding. They are needed at home; let them stay there, and not get foolish notions."

If it had not been for the unnecessary energy in his voice, Pen would have been disposed to have argued the point, but she saw so clearly that his refusal did not depend on his alleged reasons, that she held her peace.

There was a slight flush on Miss Trevor's face.

"You young ladies are in college, I think you said?"

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose this whim is an outgrowth of that. I don't believe in young women going to college. It is entirely unnecessary, and quite ruins them for their natural duties in life. Young women would do much better at home learning housekeeping. Now, young ladies, I am an old man, and my time is valuable. Will you excuse me if I wish you good-day?"

They departed, crestfallen and unsuccessful. Miss Trevor was indignant.

Pen gave a resigned sigh and said, "Well, poor old fellow, I expect he has kind of grown that way."

"I beg your pardon, ladies" —

A gentleman was speaking to them rather hurriedly and with more color than was natural to him in his face.

Miss Trevor recognized him instantly as the young man who had stood by the window in the office throughout the interview.

"I was in the room while you were talking with Mr. Johnson. You will pardon me if I say I liked what you said. I am glad you

are interested in these little girls. I have thought myself it would be a good thing if some one was. I am sorry your plan was not more favorably received, and perhaps I will do something — if I may. I thought, while you were talking, of a room I have, one that is at present unoccupied, in a building of mine on Hanover Street. I think it will be just the thing you want.”

The girls’ faces assured him that Hanover Street was just the street.

“You shall have it,” he continued, “if you call there, number 40 Hanover Street, to-day or to-morrow. The janitor will show you the room and will recognize you as the lessees. I am Mr. Purdon, Junior.” He bowed gravely and left them.

They could hardly believe their ears. Pen had a way of shaking hands when moved in any way, and she at once held out her hand to Miss Trevor. It was firmly grasped.

“Did you understand that young man in the way I did?”

“Should n’t wonder!” Pen was waxing cheerful.

“Did you ever!”

They walked for as much as a minute in silence. They looked at each other. Each discovered that the other was smiling.

“Never heard of any thing like it in my life!” exclaimed Miss Trevor.

Neither of them had expected to be successful in their expedition. But they had expected that they would be received with friendly interest and philanthropic platitudes, and that they would be put off with graceful, soothing excuses.

“We will have something to tell now,” said Pen. “You tell it.”

She never remembered having a feeling before that any matter there was to tell should be told by any one else but herself.

The idea struck Miss Trevor as ridiculous.

“Success is having a bad effect on you. I never expected to hear such a remark from Penelope Randolph.”

“And I never expected to see Gertrude Trevor take hold voluntarily of any business as disagreeable as I know you expected to find this,” retorted Pen.

Miss Trevor looked for a second as though she might freeze at that remark, then she laughed. "We may both learn something of each other, and through this plan of yours. Let us be friends."

"With all my heart." And they finished their walk with different ideas about several matters from those they entertained when they started.

They were greeted by a volley of questions.

"Did you see any body?"

"Both of them?"

"Which one?"

"Did they say No?"

"Did they turn you out?"

"Of course you have n't a room!"

"What did they say, any way?"

Pen's face was funereal.

"Girls, he said — he said college was n't any place for young women!"

"Oh, he did n't! You did n't ask that! What did he say?"

"He said he did n't believe in it, and had n't a room. I don't know that he did

say that he had n't a room, but at any rate he refused us unconditionally."

The girls' faces fell.

"Oh, of course! Just what I thought!"

"I knew it would be that way!"

"Well, I expect it will all drop through sooner or later."

"Pen, if you don't tell right off, I will," quoth Miss Trevor.

"Gertrude, I am at your service." And Pen told circumstantially, enthusiastically, and correctly the events of the interview.

The girls were delighted. They could hardly believe it.

"Yes, it's started now, sure!" said Pen.

But they felt more as though "it was started" when three of them that afternoon, having walked to number 40 Hanover Street, were greeted by the janitor almost before they had said a word, with a respectful "This way, ladies. Mr. Purdon said you would be in to see the room."

CHAPTER V.

FURNISHINGS.

THE committee of three elected to inspect the room consisted of Pen, Miss Trevor, and René.

The janitor took them up to the third story and showed them into a large front room.

“Why, what a lovely room!”

“Yes, miss, it is a fine room.”

The room was wholly unfurnished but it was clean.

“This room has to be het by a stove,” said the janitor, “and Mr. Purdon said that there was an unused stove in the basement, and a very good one it is, miss, which you would have. It’s a fine heater. And I understand from Mr. Purdon that I’m to have the care of the room, as to tending to and lighting your fire in the evenings.

I understand it's to be a reading-room, miss, and a very nice one it will make, and I'm to keep it locked in the day, and have it ready evenings at what time you say."

"Well, if a man could be any more thoughtful, I would like to see him," said René to Miss Trevor, in a tone of deep conviction.

"We will be in here a few minutes thinking what we will need for the room," said Pen to the janitor.

"Very well, miss. I'll be in the little room where it's marked 'Janitor,'" and he departed.

René was in a mood to be pleased with every thing.

"What a perfectly lovely janitor!"

"Now for business. What do we want? I mean what must we have? Doesn't this seem like a stupendous undertaking?" rather weakly. "Gertrude and René, speak up."

"Yes, it does," referring to the undertaking; "let's sit down here in this window-

seat. What fine windows! What did ail that young Purdon to act so decently?"

"If we are going to have a stove we need coal," said René.

"That is so; we will need coal, lots of it perhaps. I don't know much about coal, how much one stove would burn every evening in the week; do you, Pen?"

"No; but some of the girls are sure to know. I'll just put that down," and she jotted down "Coal."

"What next?"

"Carpet, of course," said Pen. "We must have a carpet; girls, is n't this fearful? If I ever go to housekeeping I shall collapse under the responsibility, because I can't imagine myself with any money to buy any thing with."

"That would be a desperate condition, I confess. I suppose the carpet will be ingrain; is n't that a cheap kind?"

René and Pen both thought it must be.

"Ingrain carpet," wrote Pen.

"Curtains," said René. "It will make



"If we are going to have a stove, we need coal," said Ren . "That's so," said Pen, and she jotted down "Coal."—Page 94. *Pen's Venture.*

the room look twice as well. We must have curtains."

"Curtains are expensive," demurred Gertrude.

"Cheese-cloth," said René; "that is cheap enough. Here are two windows, and they have inside shutters; now we can put up cheese-cloth curtains and they will look lovely. I know just the kind—a sort of a yellow color."

"They ought to be bright. Could n't a band of Turkey red be stitched down the front edges?"

"I don't think that would be pretty," said René.

"Maybe it would n't. We can talk it over; but it would be brighter, would n't it? and I suppose that would be an item."

"Cheese-cloth curtains," wrote Pen. "What next?"

"A table. I think two smaller tables might be better than one big one."

"Table, one or two," was Pen's note.

"Chairs!"

"That is so! Chairs! How many chairs?"

"How many girls can we accommodate?"

The room had to be paced. They knew that they would be no wiser after it was paced than before, but they paced it diligently.

"Here," said René, "the stove will be here, and the table here; if it is a large table you could put ten chairs around it, couldn't you? And if they are smaller tables I am sure they will be large enough for five chairs apiece. That will be ten. Then, say there are three chairs around the stove; I am sure there would then be plenty of room for a couple more chairs in other places, and leave enough space to move around in."

"That makes fifteen girls," said Gertrude. "Yes, I should think the room ought to do for fifteen. But I don't think there ought to be any more, do you? It would make it too crowded."

"All right;" and Pen wrote down "Fifteen chairs."

"Perhaps, just at first," said she, "we could have eleven or twelve chairs and three or four stools, or crickets, or hassocks, whatever those uncomfortable little things are. How would that do?"

"We can remember that, at any rate."

"Now there ought to be some pictures and pretty things," said René. "I don't take much stock in that kind of thing, but a room needs it. Such things can be picked up easy enough from the girls, I suppose."

"Certainly."

Miss Trevor had an idea that, unaided, she could give the room quite a "finish."

"Then there will be books and papers; we can pick those up easily enough," said Pen. "If they were older, the cash girls, I mean, they might be interested in such things; I doubt if they will be as it is."

She was thinking of Lucretia McKinney's remarks.

"Oh, I don't know; some of them might like it immensely. We will have a couple of those swinging shelves of books, and

let's have a healthy kind of books, with good pictures of home-life, and attractive, and every one of them picked out carefully. Of course they will have to be stories or they will not be read at all."

"That is so! I am in for that. I shall move that you run the books, Gertrude; I like your ideas."

"And I should move that you have the final revision. I like *your* ideas."

"What a complimentary couple you are," laughed René. "I have seen the time when Pen complimented me heroically."

"Well, René is the best girl that ever was; you have to live with her to find it out though. This is our second year together, and we have never had a row unless I plagued her beyond endurance; and we had a three years' correspondence before that, did n't we, René?" affectionately. "To continue the subject, we need a carpet, curtains, one or two tables, fifteen chairs, pictures and books. How are we going to get them?"

"I for one have no doubt that we will get them," said Miss Trevor, as she rose to go.

They took a long, final, admiring look at the room and went down the somewhat dingy staircase of number 40 with a new sense of possession.

The next day there was to be a meeting at noon of the girls particularly interested in the new room.

They had all talked about it to the other girls and there was quite a large gathering in the gymnasium.

Miss Trevor told about their going to the building and how the janitor escorted them to the third story, and how he explained Mr. Purdon's offer of the stove.

Pen read her little list of things needed.

The carpet, what were they to do about a carpet?

"Suppose we let the carpet go for awhile, till some one thinks of something," said one.

"The curtains. René, my friend, most

of you know her, was with us yesterday afternoon, and she suggested cheese-cloth curtains; they will certainly be cheap and I presume will look pretty and cheerful. There are two windows. That is something we could take up a subscription for right off and buy to-day."

"How will they be made?"

"I will take them out home, or they can be sent out, and I will run them up on the machine so that they will look all right. That is easily done," said Miss Gower.

"Who will buy them?"

"As René suggested it and knows about them, why should n't she buy them?" said Gertrude.

"Very well; and you, Miss Gower, as you are to make them, you must go too."

"Don't see the sequence, but I will go," said Miss Gower.

"We will collect the money this afternoon."

"Now for the tables," said Pen. "What are we going to do about tables?"

"I know there is an old table, though it is quite sound, at our house, that I should think would be just the thing if it can be got up there," spoke up one of the girls.

"And there is a table at our house I can have," said Miss Trevor. "I will see that it is sent around, and if you are willing; Louise, the man will take yours at the same time."

"Girls, how nice this is!" broke in Pen. "Here we have the tables and curtains already! Now the chairs — fifteen chairs. Don't know how we'll get that many."

Miss Baker had rather a business head.

"What do you say to this? We will talk to all the girls, and there are enough of us to get the chairs if certain ones will be responsible for them. We may get some at home; those that live at home may be able to get a chair, or get somebody to give us a one, or we can buy some if we can't do any thing else. I think we could easily get most of them without buying.

Suppose we constitute ourselves a committee of the whole on chairs?"

"Just the thing," said several girls.

So that was passed over.

"Pictures and such things."

"That is easy enough. We can find enough things to make the walls look well."

"Books."

"Nearly every girl here could get a nice book, the kind of a one that would be suitable. You all have a spare book that you used to indulge in, have n't you? Or your small brothers or sisters have. And be sensible about it, do. Don't bring trash."

"Girls," said Pen, in an awestruck tone, "I forgot the coal!"

"The coal!" "Oh, the coal!" "Yes, the coal!"

The coal for some reason seemed to be quite an obstacle.

"Why, to be sure," said little Mattie Chester. "I don't know why I forgot it. I have an uncle in coal, Chester & Son, and

he is real generous. I believe he would give you the coal if you would go to him and tell him all about it."

"Miss Trevor and Pen will have to go, they were so startlingly successful last time," cried one girl.

Pen looked anxiously at Gertrude.

"All right," said she, with a conscious smile at Pen.

"Mattie, you will have to come too, of course."

"Yes, I will. I can't be sure about my uncle's doing the right thing, you know, but I have n't much doubt as to the result."

The girls all felt as though they had accomplished quite an amount of business in a few minutes. One day had given them quite a start; they hoped to be in working order by the next Saturday. Four o'clock that afternoon saw several sets of girls intent on the same business in different parts of the city.

René and Miss Gower proceeded to Johnson & Purdon's, their minds filled with

cheese-cloth curtains. René spoke to nearly all the cash girls whose acquaintance she had made, and felt that she was eyed by others of the little girls and by some of the clerks.

"How do you do, Georgie? At what counter is your sister?"

"She is up-stairs in the cotton cloth," said Georgie, with a pleased smile.

"That is where we will have to go, is n't it, René?" asked Miss Gower.

"There, I believe that is Georgie's sister," said René, in an excited way, as they neared the counter. "She looks enough like her."

They made their purchase of her.

"Have you a little sister, one of the cash girls, named Georgie?"

The girl smiled brightly; she had a lovely smile.

"Yes, I have."

"I met her the other night, last Saturday night," said René.

"She said she had a splendid time. It was so kind of the young ladies, I think, to do that" —

She was interrupted by a fit of coughing.

"You poor girl!" said Miss Gower, her sympathy showing in her face. "What a fearful cough! Don't you do any thing for it?"

"Yes; I take a kind of cough medicine, but I don't believe it is much good. I don't know what to do exactly. A woman in the house gave me a whiskey sling, but" — she reddened — "perhaps it is foolish, but I would rather not take it."

"I'm glad of it," said Miss Gower. "I would n't take it either. I don't believe in that kind of thing myself. You ought to be careful though."

On their way out Miss Gower said: —

"I feel worried about that girl; it seems too bad. Just think what a fuss my mother would make over me in that state! I believe I will risk making her angry, and do something."

They passed a counter with the sign: "GREAT REDUCTION! CHEST PROTECTORS!"

"I'll get one of those for what it is worth."

When she had secured that prize she announced a determination to go to Mink's, on the corner, for mustard, lemons, and sugar.

"I intend to give these things to Georgie and tell her what to do with them. No, that will take too much time. Perhaps they won't like her to be talked to so long. I'll write it out. Then perhaps I shall have more than enough left to say to her by word of mouth."

She tore a bit of paper out of her notebook, took her stylographic pen, and wrote her instructions.

"You ought to be a doctor, Miss Gower," said René.

"That is what I intend to be, if nothing happens."

They went back to the store and discovered Georgie.

"Georgie," said Miss Gower, in a kindly way, "I have just seen your sister, and she

has a fearful cough. I did not like the sound of it at all. It made me feel so badly that I wanted to do something, and I hope your sister will not object, but I got one of these things; you will see what it is; and I got this mustard and some lemons and sugar, and I wrote in a little note what you are to do with them. I want you to do it, and then it will be done. And you really must be very careful of your sister. I am afraid she may be sick if that cough runs on."

Georgie's pretty, anxious face testified that she entertained the same fear.

"I will do it all, miss. Thank you, thank you;" and she ran off to answer a call of "CASH!"

"My mother would be simply in love with that child," said Miss Gower.

In the meanwhile Gertrude, Pen, and Mattie Chester walked rapidly to the office of "Chester & Son, Wholesale Coal Dealers."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Chester, a hearty, genial old gentleman, as he saw

his niece, "is this you, Mattie? Come in, come in!"

Mattie introduced her friends and said with an attempt at solemnity:—

"We are all here on business, uncle."

"Business! Oh, it is business, is it? Well, ladies, I am very much pleased to see you, business or not, and what can I do for you to-day?"

The three girls, in a kind of serial and supplemental fashion, managed to tell their cash-girl plan and about their room and their need of coal.

Mr. Chester sat in his office-chair, smiling encouragingly as they told their story. He emphasized any good point by a *sotto voce* "Bless my soul!" His elbows rested on the arms of his chair, while all his finger-tips met. With every approving nod his finger-tips were gently separated and as gently replaced.

When the story had been detailed to the satisfaction of all three, and Mattie had anxiously asked, "And now, what do you

say, uncle?" he nodded emphatically with a "Bless my soul! My dear young ladies, bless my soul! What do I say? Why, I am heartily glad of it! Heartily glad of it! It is a fine thing that you who are young and fortunate should have a few thoughts for those who are not so well off. I am exceedingly interested. And as for the coal, certainly, certainly. All the coal you need; quite right! I will send you around a load to-morrow, without doubt. This is exceedingly interesting! Bless my soul, it certainly is!"

"Mattie, my dear," he said, as he shook hands all around when they were leaving, "Mattie, you must certainly bring your friends around to tea some evening, if they will do us the honor to come. I shall be so anxious for your Aunt Chester to see them. Young ladies, you have my sincerest good wishes."

"Mattie, what an old darling your uncle is!" said the girls.

Mattie blushed with pleasure.

"I think he is pretty nice, too! At any rate, we have the coal. I am so glad!"

Miss Trevor seemed wrapped in meditation; her idea finally took expression in words.

"I wonder what it is — what makes the difference between Mr. Chester and that Mr. Johnson. I wonder if they were at all alike when they were boys. I wonder if it was because one of them cultivated one way of thinking, and the other another, that they show such a different sort of a spirit now. Or what is it?"

"Give it up," said Pen; "but I can tell you one thing, such thoughts scare me. What are we making of ourselves and what disagreeable crooks and turns and mannerisms are we fixing in ourselves for other people, in some later day, to laugh at, detest, or excuse? We see so much to object to, simple little unnecessary things often, in nearly every middle-aged person we meet."

"It's awful, Pen, simply awful!"

They separated at the next corner. Pen walked up the street thinking of the various things that had happened. Her mind took little flying visits into the future, and she laughed at herself as she caught herself thinking of the ideal establishment for friendless girls making their own living.

"You seem to like your own thoughts pretty well, Miss Randolph."

Rodney Hoare had just caught up with her.

"Oh, is it you? Are you going my way? That is nice. I have so much to tell you."

"That is fine. I am all ears."

"I have told this story in a variety of ways, and perhaps you have heard something about it, but I am as full of it as ever, so perhaps I shall get through it satisfactorily."

She began at the beginning of the cash-girl story and told the different parts with and without variations. Rodney laughed in a most hilarious fashion over the McKinney part and over the interview with Mr. Johnson.

"That is great! How I wish I had been there!"

She told all about their room and the furniture.

"That is the best thing I have heard in a long time! So that is what you meant last Wednesday?" with a friendly smile. "I liked that. I believe I told you so at the time. I could n't help feeling friends with you then; was n't that all right?"

"I am sure I am very glad of it."

"You have been lucky about your furniture and things, have n't you? I think we boys might do a little something on that to help out."

"Do you know, I wish you would n't suggest such a thing," said Pen, earnestly. "I'll tell you why. I know very well that from one source or another we shall get all the things we need, and that shortly. And as you spoke about being interested in this kind of thing, did n't you? and as you have considerable influence among some of the boys, judging from all I hear, I wish, for

my part, that you would put what energy and time and money you have to spare into some separate, complete thing on your own account. If you are in earnest, I know it will amount to something and be of some use, and you will all take ever so much more interest in it."

He was silent a minute.

"Do you know, I believe that. I think you are real square to say so. I have been thinking, in a very weak, inefficient way, I know, but still thinking, that there was doubtless a great deal that I could do if I were willing to try, and what you said Wednesday fitted right into my feelings. And I think too, I ought to be ashamed to say it, that I would just let it go at thinking — stop there — think up quite a scheme, perhaps, and let it die in my mind. But for once I believe I will actually try something, simple of course, and see what will come of it. And I'll get some of the fellows interested in it too. That Hill in your class is a real good fellow that way —

always doing something. And I would like to talk with you about my scheme, if I get any up; may I?"

"You know perfectly well that I shall be ever so much interested."

"I believe you would be. I am certainly interested in the cash-girls' Arcadia and I want to hear more about it. Next time I walk up here with you I hope to have something to tell you in return for your story to-day."

"Be sure you do," said Pen, as she turned to go up her boarding-house steps.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OPENING OF THE READING-ROOM.

AT twelve o'clock this morning," said Pen, on Wednesday morning, to René, "I shall go down to our room and measure it for the carpet. We don't know where we are going to get the carpet, but it will be well to know how much we need."

Pen was gathering her books together and hurrying on her coat in a way that indicated plainly to one as initiated as René that Pen's minutes for getting over to chapel were limited.

René was standing up her easel, getting out her paints, and was expecting her latest model to appear. This model was a little colored boy, much addicted to eating. René's provisional inducements to her model's good behavior stood in an enticing row on the mantel-piece: an apple, a glass of

milk, a cracker, a gingersnap, a piece of bread and sugar, a cookie, a slab of molasses candy, and a long red-and-white stick of peppermint candy.

"Good-by! Good luck with your model!"

And Pen banged their door in a most unwarrantable fashion, and was gone.

When the eleven o'clock recitation was over, Pen and Margie sallied forth in the direction of Hanover Street.

"We could paint most of the floor," said Margie, "and put rugs down, or drugget or something."

"Ye-es," was Pen's doubtful answer. "The rugs might be rather in the way, might n't they?"

She was thinking of the way she and René periodically apostrophized the one rug in their room, on account of its unsurpassed knack for tripping them up when they were without a light, and for the way it had of rolling and doubling up whenever the table or chairs were moved.

They found the janitor.

“ Good morning, Mr. ” —

“ Todd, miss, Todd — Jacob Todd, which was the name of the departed before me, quite a many departeds, I suppose.”

He seemed to be in very good spirits and in a conversational mood.

“ Are you English, Mr. Todd ? ”

“ Yes, miss, I am. My father, the departed, was English, and my mother, also departed, was English. We came over here when I was a matter of eight or nine.”

“ I had an idea that the English, some of them, dropped and put on h’s, but you do not at all.”

Mr. Todd did not seem displeased with this allusion, though before it was out of her mouth Pen felt ashamed of herself.

“ Nor I don’t, miss, but my father did to his last day, and I well remember the first day I was sent to school over here, I says, ‘ Hi ’m Hinglish, hi ham ! ’ and was laughed at till I all but cried my heart out. Here you are, ladies. It will be a surprise to you, won’t it ? ”

And it was a surprise. When the janitor opened the door they saw that the room was neatly carpeted with a bright, fresh, new carpet and the stove was up. Margie and Pen were too surprised to speak for a moment.

"How ever did this happen, Mr. Todd?"

His face was beaming.

"There's a bit of a note for you on the chimbley-piece."

They took the note. It read:—

"I have taken the liberty of putting down a carpet in your reading-room. Please accept it as a little token of my interest in your kindly plan. R. PURDON, SR."

Pen looked significantly at Margie. Margie smiled.

It was a very pretty carpet. The room seemed to the girls to be nearly furnished.

"Well, isn't it wonderful? Won't the girls be surprised?"

"How do you like it, Mr. Todd?"

"It's a gay, fine carpet. The men only left above an hour ago."

As the girls walked rapidly back, they continued to congratulate themselves about the carpet.

“Just as soon as the prayer-meeting is over we will get the girls into the Gym and tell them. Won’t they be surprised?”

She was right. They were surprised. Quite as much so as they themselves had been.

“A carpet! Down!” said Miss Trevor. “Mr. Purdon, Senior, is it? Perhaps if we had seen him in the first place it would have been all right.”

“I don’t know about that,” said one girl. “I imagine that Purdon, Junior, whoever that mystical young man may be, was at the bottom of this. I don’t see how things could be any better, no matter whom you might have seen.”

“I would n’t be willing to risk it myself,” said Miss Trevor.

“Girls!”

The general hubbub of conversation ceased; Pen’s tone meant business.

"Girls, how soon can this thing be done?"

"First meeting Saturday night," said one girl.

"That is so! We can be ready for Saturday night easily."

That seemed to be the general opinion.

"The tables shall go around this afternoon."

Miss Trevor's manner was bristling with determination.

"All the small truck can be collected and brought in by Friday afternoon, surely."

"Nan and I will stir up the girls, and see that all the chairs are there not later than Saturday noon," said Miss Baker.

"I suppose a few of us who are in town here can go down early Saturday afternoon and fix every thing up in a little while. René and I will go down."

"I will certainly be there," said Miss Trevor.

"I am generally considered useful on any such occasion, and it will be easy for me to go," added Miss Baker.

"I think that will be enough of us," said Pen. "We will all be down there by two o'clock and will make short work of it. You will see that the books and every thing are in, won't you, girls?"

"Of course."

"There are half a dozen here already."

"I think we ought to have some games," said Miss Gower.

"Well, to be sure! I wonder we did n't think of that before!"

"I can bring a checker-board and Pilgrim's Progress," said Nan.

"Holloa, what is that last?"

"Oh, it is a game. John, my little brother, has it, and he said I could have it."

"Present our sincere thanks to Master John," said Pen. "Margie, make Ted and Louis give us something."

"I will," said Margie; "there are lots of things around the house. If we keep the games in mind I am sure we can get enough. I suppose checkers and backgammon are as good as any thing."

"Girls, don't you feel dreadfully in the dark as to what is going to happen next? We will certainly have the room open — then what? Those girls may come and think it is one big joke, and act like fiends possessed. They may make an outrageous noise, and throw the books around, and carry the magazines home, and invite boys up there and do any thing."

Pen's voice was tragic. The girls laughed, but they saw it was a question to be seriously considered.

"We must plan this thing carefully and reasonably and as is becoming" —

"Beings with a classic education ; is that it, Gertrude ?"

"We have received so much kindness and interest," continued Gertrude, ignoring Pen's frivolous interruption, "that we must not allow this to fall through or deteriorate. There is one thing: three of us will go down Saturday night and that meeting will be tided over, but we must have a well-ordered plan and not trust wholly to luck."

"There ought to be some one there always, every evening, to see if things go right. There will be fifteen girls there probably, and if there were fourteen angels and one McKinney, I should expect trouble."

"I believe you are hard on Lucretia, Miss Thomas," said Pen, but in her secret soul she agreed with her.

"One or two of us might be there every evening, I suppose, by taking turns," suggested one girl.

"Oh, don't! You won't agree to that, will you?"

"I would n't stop at the trouble," said Pen, thoughtfully, "but I really don't believe that would do. On account of going and coming I suppose there would have to be two of us, and that would unnecessarily fill up the room. We don't need the fire and lights. Then, too, we are a different kind. It could not be expected that we would be in sympathy with them in their talk and amusements; besides, being older, we are used to a different way of living and doing

things, and I know very well our presence — not having any object there except one uncomplimentary to them — would be very irksome.”

“That is so.” “I believe that.” “You’re as right as can be.”

“Of course,” went on Pen, “if we were there for some particular thing it would be different; and I am very anxious that we may think of things to do that will take us down to that room and interest us in those girls, and give us a chance to exert that helpful, right kind of an influence that it is not conceit to say we ought to have.”

“Go ahead, Pen. We are all here yet.”

“And yet I do think there ought to be some one there” —

“I have an idea,” said Miss Gower. “You know that little Georgie and Georgie’s sister?”

Pen’s face brightened perceptibly.

“They live right near Hanover Street, and they live by themselves in one room. They can’t live in any great style, can they? And

the sister seems to be an uncommonly nice girl. I thought so ; I spoke to her the other day when René and I went for the curtains. And she would be just the one, I think. She is a clerk in that very store, and the girls know her, and they know and like Georgie. I know she would be very glad of a nice, warm, comfortable place to go evenings, and she is the same kind of a girl that the cash girls are, and would quite understand them, and I am convinced that she is an unusually nice girl. What do you think of it, Pen ? ”

“ I think that is exactly the thing. It would be quite an advantage to her and I think would answer every purpose. I believe we can try that. As for Saturday night, there will be some excuse for our being there to open up things, and we will try to get up something to eat. I know that is a good plan. To this day nothing makes me feel so much at home in a house as to have the people give me something extra good to eat.”

The girls all laughed.

"What will we do Saturday night?"

"We can give them something to eat and talk things over with them, and what do you say to our getting that cornet girl to go, if she will?"

"The cornet girl will go," said a pleasant voice.

Miss Guernsey stood in the door.

"I have been meaning to ask if I could do any thing for you with my cornet."

"And Gertrude, would you mind bringing your violin?"

She asked the question rather hesitatingly.

Miss Trevor looked at Pen with the odd smile that Pen was fast learning to recognize, and said she would.

"Perhaps we three will be enough," she said, "that we may not fill up the room too much. You said René was going to be out all the evening."

"Yes; René can't go. Now the only thing left is to see to informing the girls. I

will attend to that. And I wonder how we will get hold of Georgie's sister."

"Do you know, Pen," said Miss Gower, "if you don't mind, I have a plan? I would like to have you take hold of it, but I am afraid you might feel sort of—sort of offended."

"What is it? You grow interesting."

"I am interested if not interesting. I am interested in Georgie's sister and in Georgie, and I have talked to my mother about them, and she—she is the best-hearted woman you ever saw—is as interested in both of them as can be, and I know would like to see them. Now I thought I would like very much to invite Georgie and her sister out to tea, and I could invite them out for Friday evening; and you, if you would n't mind, Pen—would you mind?—could come out too, and could talk it all up with the older one."

"Capital! And would I mind? Girls, I put myself on the country, did you ever know me to do any thing but mind an invitation out to tea? That's the time I

am your obedient servant. That is a good plan, Audrey. I shall certainly be there."

The business seemed to be about over, and promising to get the various articles of furniture, books, and small things together as soon as possible, the girls separated.

Pen considered the evening spent at Mrs. Gower's quite a link in the chain. She rode out with Audrey and found Mrs. Gower, as Audrey had modestly asserted, one of the best-hearted women in the world. Her kindly, hospitable manner quite won Pen's heart, and as soon as she saw her she felt glad that Georgie's sister was to meet and know her. It seemed to be such a right thing that the girl who had no home and mother should be made welcome in the home of a woman who had a daughter of her own and would presumably feel for and sympathize with the stranger.

The two guests came as soon as they could leave the store. They both seemed

shy and a little embarrassed, but very glad to be there. Mrs. Gower made them feel at home at once, and talked principally with Georgie's sister. Georgie called her sister Paul.

The two names seemed to Mrs. Gower to savor of something not quite right. It was with such evident anxiety that she asked Paul how she and her sister both happened to have boys' names, that it made Pen and Audrey laugh.

Even Paul's beautiful face betrayed an amused smile as she said:—

“My mother named us both after my father. My father was named George Paul Carr. He died before Georgie was born; he was killed by a fall from a scaffolding; he was a builder. My mother had named me Pauline, but they always called me Paul, and she named my sister Georgiana, but she never was called any thing but Georgie. My mother did sewing and kept us as well as she could; she died four years ago. I am twenty now, and I had then just been made

a clerk in Johnson & Purdon's. I always kept Georgie with me ; she is ten now, and this year I got her in as a cash girl."

She said it all quietly and frankly, as though she thought it quite right that her hostess should know something about her, and yet not as though she was explaining or apologizing for any thing. Her beautiful face, the grace of her manner, and the affectionate way in which she spoke of Georgie all affected good-hearted Mrs. Gower.

"Poor child! poor child!" she said, with tears in her eyes, "what a brave little girl you are!"

And Pen heard her, when she was bidding the sisters good-by that night, say:—

"Dear child, you will always think of me as a friend, will you not, and come to me? You will always find a warm welcome here, and do mind what I say, and make some quaker for your cold, and be careful, and are you well wrapped up?"

And Paul, pretty, tired Paul, who had worked so hard, early and late, and had

tried so unceasingly to keep the little legacy her mother had left her fed and clothed, and be all her mother would have wanted her to be,—Paul, who had hardly known any real childhood, and who was growing more tired every day, and was haunted by the dread of a coming illness, and was so worried, often, about herself and her pretty little sister, that she scarcely knew which way to turn,—Paul, who liked nice things, and pretty things, and had a sort of longing for kind words, and she had heard kind words but without daring to trust them,—Paul, when she reached the bare little room they lived in, sat down in their one old rocking-chair, took Georgie in her lap and cried like a baby; cried as she had not cried for years, and she felt better for it. It had been a very strange new thing, the kindness and motherly attention of that evening. She never remembered an evening that she had enjoyed more, and in some way the burden seemed lifted; the future did not seem so dark, and the relief seemed so great, so sure, yet she hardly knew why.

“Don’t cry, Paul. I know just what you feel like, though; ain’t she just a lovely lady, Mrs. Gower? I knew they’d all love you, Paul. I do love you so, Paul, my Paul!” and Georgie patted her sister’s face and stroked her hair.

Pen had had a long talk with Paul in regard to the reading-room. The girl fascinated Pen, her face was so beautiful, and Pen had told her the whole plan, and had asked for her suggestions at every point.

“And now, Miss Carr, or may I too call you Paul? we are very much perplexed about what we are to do. It is only reasonable, is n’t it, that there should be some one in the room that the girls will respect and mind. Some one to see that they do not make too much noise, or use whatever may be in the room too carelessly. And we have a rather big favor to ask of you. We want to make the room as attractive and comfortable as can be, and I don’t know how it could be made any more attractive than by having you in it;

and those girls all like you, and if you would or could spend your evenings there, you shall have the most comfortable chair we can get, and we will take pains to get you any books you want. Now could you, do you think? Would it be too much trouble?"

Paul smiled; it was almost a pitiful little smile.

"I have nearly envied Georgie a chance to go there, and I would be so glad to be there, and I would do any thing you wanted, that I could, any way. But I'm afraid I won't do."

"Indeed, you will, if you are only willing. We don't want a Gorgon, or somebody to be always spying on the girls, and making them feel horrid; we want some one that the girls will like and whom they will regard as one of themselves. You would n't have to do a thing except see that the room was not too crowded, and that they went home at the right time, and that they were not too noisy and did not injure the things more

than would be reasonable. You think that is all right, don't you?"

"I should think it would be quite the thing. Oh, I do wish the clerks, the older ones, had some such thing, or some one to take an interest in them," she said earnestly. "You don't know how some of them change, and how they get used to a wild kind of life. Indeed, you don't know. I don't know what I might have been already, if it had not been for Georgie. I do get so worried about Georgie!"

"You need n't fret about Georgie as long as she has you to look after her," said Pen, warmly. "I want to know, too, what you think about doing something for the girls. What do you think of this? Suppose one night in the week some one should go down to the room and spend the evening showing the girls about different kinds of sewing, mending, and all that kind of thing, and work up to cutting and fitting and whatever would enable them to make their own clothes; do you think they would pay any attention to it?"

Paul's face lighted up.

"Indeed they would! It is a great thing for some of us to get our clothes made. It costs to have it done, and yet many don't know any thing about such things. I know more than some, perhaps, because I have just had to do so much for Georgie, and I would be glad enough to know more, I can tell you. My mother did sewing."

That was a new idea of Pen's, but she spoke of it as though she had thought of it some time before. She suddenly had another idea.

"And how do you think it would do for some one to go down one evening in the week and read something bright and interesting to the girls, and have a little music and singing? Perhaps teach them some new songs, if they would like it?"

"I think that would be ever so nice. It does seem so good of you all to think of such things."

"And another thing," said Pen, rather more gravely; "I hope you feel with me

in this. We ought to remember in all this, ought n't we? a little something more than the actual practical things that take so much of our time and attention. What we all owe to God — to Christ — we ought to remember together, and remind each other of, should we not? And as I am afraid that perhaps many of these little girls may not have been accustomed to hearing or thinking much about these other subjects — our relations to God and to each other — and do not perhaps attend very regularly any church or service, I have wondered if it would be out of the way or would be disliked if some one would go there Sunday night, and if they could all have a little Bible-reading and some singing. How do you think that would do?"

"I think that would be a good thing," said Paul. "But there is something to be said about it. Now I am a Protestant and my mother was a very good woman, I know, a Christian woman; and though I know very well I have not done what I

ought to in this, still I have remembered what my mother taught me and have tried a little to teach Georgie; but you must remember that many of these girls are Irish and are Catholics, quite a good many of them. And though I hardly know one that is a good Catholic or any thing but indifferent, still there isn't one that is a Catholic that is n't set against, in a kind of a way, any thing Protestant or Bible-like. But I do think if some one came of a Sunday night, and there was singing, hymns and such like, and nice, kind talking to the girls, that they would like it and it would do them lots of good."

"You've got the right of it, you have!" said Pen, admiringly, though somewhat unnecessarily. "I like what you say very much, and you have more sense than I have. I'm much obliged to you, and I will remember it."

She detailed the conversation Saturday afternoon, as she and René, Miss Trevor and Miss Baker, were busy at the reading-room.

The janitor, the smiling Jacob Todd, had obligingly offered his services, but they were not needed. It was a very amusing thing to arrange the room, and in spite of their high-minded resolves to do it up quickly, they stopped periodically to sit on the tables and plan or tell funny things or discourse on life in general. Two swinging shelves were put up and filled with books. Six neatly framed pictures were hung. The curtains were pronounced a great success. René had sent down her two rejected water-colors and they gave quite a cultured and artistic finish to the room.

"They might just as well hang down here for a while as anywhere," said René, mournfully.

The chairs were all there; fifteen chairs and three hassocks.

"I expect we three will have to sit on the hassocks to-night," said Pen, gazing down at one of them. "Won't we look funny?"

Both tables had covers; one a red one and one a dark-green one. They were a

wonderful improvement to the room. Magazines and papers were put on one table and the games on the other. A waste-paper basket, trimmed up with bright ribbon, a newspaper-rack also brightened with ribbon, some highly decorated old pickle-jars for the mantel-piece, and a little alarm-clock that Mr. Harding had sent in, and some gorgeous Japanese fans, made the room look, as all the girls agreed, "perfectly lovely."

There was quite a collection of small baskets of eatables that the girls had sent or brought there during the day. They were sorted and put in a convenient place at one end of the room.

"Girls, we are done!"

Out came Pen's watch.

"We have only been two hours and a half. It is just half-past four. Is n't it fine?"

They all gave a long look at the room before they closed the door, and there were four varied sighs of satisfaction as they went down-stairs.

"We will be back before very long, won't we, Gertrude? Mr. Todd," as Pen caught sight of that gentleman, "do go up and see the reading-room and admire it! You will please have the fire started so that the room will be comfortable by six. We will be here shortly after."

"Yes, miss, certain!" was the prompt reply.

It was with considerable excitement that the three chief actors in the evening's entertainment met in that room a little later.

Pen could hardly keep still, and she was in such a state of general hilarity that the other two, doing all they could to repress her, caught the spirit themselves.

The "cornet girl" got out her cornet, and Miss Trevor tightened up her violin. They began an inspiring tune, and Pen executed a war-dance. While their orgy was in full progress, the door suddenly opened and Lucretia McKinney, with a tribe of followers, appeared.

Miss Guernsey and Miss Trevor lowered



The two "girls" began an inspiring tune, and Pen executed a war-dance.—
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Pen's Venture.

their instruments and felt their mirth come to an untimely end. Pen, however, was not abashed.

“Come right in, girls! Come in! We want to give you a welcome to your new room.”

She shook hands with every girl that entered, while the other two, again in possession of their faculties, helped them off with their things and offered them chairs. The room was warm and brightly lighted, and looked delightfully pleasant. Each little girl expressed her surprise and pleasure as she entered, either by words or looks. The words were often more amusing than appropriate, but they were always sincere.

Pen had urged Lucretia not to have more than fifteen girls come, but there were seventeen in the room, so the three operators had one chair between them.

“That is quite right, girls,” said Miss Trevor, as two chairs were offered. “Sit down. We will need to be standing up, any way, and you youngsters have been on your feet more than we have.”

The girls gradually calmed down; their remarks of admiration and delight wore themselves out.

Miss Guernsey and Miss Trevor got out their instruments again and Pen said cheerfully:—

“I wish I was a musician, but I'm not. I like music. I knew you all would. Miss Guernsey and Miss Trevor will play. We want the first evening in this room to pass off pleasantly, and we don't know of any way to accomplish that so easily as by having some music. The young lady with the cornet is Miss Guernsey.”

The cornet and “first violin” did their best. Pen enjoyed it so much she forgot all about the cash girls, and they enjoyed it so much that they apparently forgot every thing but the music.

Kate, the contented, was radiant. Biddy sat on a hassock—one of the largest girls on one of the smallest seats—and she looked more than usually awkward, but also more than usually happy. Mary Haffey sat

by Lucretia, and was punched and nudged and pulled enthusiastically by that young woman. Mary Haffey did not seem to mind Lucretia's demonstrations, and Lucretia seemed to derive some mysterious satisfaction from them. When the music was over the girls handed around the refreshments and the clatter began again.

"This will be a fine room for a little beer and oyster supper some night," said Lucretia, benevolently, to Pen. "I know some of the older girls, some of the clerks, who would like to come, and we won't have these young fry in," pointing with some disdain to the dismayed faces of Minnie and Kate. "We could have some fellows we know, up, and by moving the tables and piling up the chairs we could have a right good dance. We might take the carpet up for it. They do some places."

Miss Trevor heard the remark and, as Pen assured her afterwards, she grew pale, but Pen was delighted. Lucretia McKinney seemed to her a mine of amusement, but

she felt more keenly the evident need for discretion.

"None of your dances and piled chairs, and carpets up, and beer and fellows, and such truck in here, young woman," she said good-naturedly. "'Pon my honor, I believe I'll keep a strait-jacket in here for you. Guess I won't though, come to think of it. I shall need your help too much."

Miss McKinney nodded complacently at the others.

"When you girls are all ready, we want to talk to you seriously about this room. We need your opinions. We want to know your wishes on certain subjects, and we will want your advice."

"You might run it off now," suggested Lucretia.

"You see, girls, this room is not very big. It will not comfortably accommodate more than fifteen. We want to know how to arrange it that only fifteen shall come. How many of you girls here to-night do

not live at home ; by that I mean not with your father or with your mother. Raise your hands."

Eight hands were raised. One Murphy, Biddy, Minnie, Georgie, Lucretia, and several others.

"Now it seems only right, does it not, girls, that those who do not live at home should be allowed to come every evening if they like?"

The girls nodded, but those who lived at home did not nod so vigorously as the others.

"Now we have thought of one thing, and if you do not like it you are to say so. This room is for any and all of the cash girls in your store. You can see how few of them could get in here, but none of you have any better right here than any of the other girls. But you might like to feel that you had more of a right. There are eight of you here who could come every evening. If you paid something every week you would feel that you had a particular right

here, and could come early and stay till the room was closed, and feel that you owned the books and papers and whatever was in the room. What do you say to those who will come regularly paying ten cents a week? That will be a little over a cent a night. If you think that is too much, say so, or if you would rather not pay at all, and run the risk of getting in or not, say so."

"I would rather pay," said one girl.

"Me too!"

"So would I!"

"I will!"

And it was quickly settled that the eight there should pay ten cents a week.

"I don't think there had better be more than eight regulars," said Pen, "because we want as many as possible to have the privilege of coming. Now there are eight more here who, if you want to have a right to come regularly some of the evenings, or for a shorter time every evening, can do so by paying five cents

a week, or you can run your chances, just as you like."

"Rather pay," said some of them; and they all agreed to pay.

"We will leave it to you to arrange about others. The fact that you eight only come part of the time will leave room for others, and you can tell other girls and give them a chance to pay for part of the time if they wish to. And if any of you are going to be away for an evening, or for part of an evening, we know very well that you will try to do the kindly thing, just as you would wish it to be done for you, and will tell some friend of yours and send her up here for that time, and that all the others will try to give her a cordial welcome. We think, if you all do your best to make the room useful, that during a week there might be from twenty to thirty girls here evenings."

The girls seemed to agree to that.

"Another thing: there ought to be some one here to see that the fire goes well, that

the room is in something like order, and to see that too many girls do not come in to inconvenience you girls, and to keep the book that tells who pays, and to take the money. That will relieve you of lots of trouble and make the room seem more homelike. We have invited some one you all like and know, to come here. Guess who it is?"

"Me!" said Lucretia McKinney, with conviction.

"No, my young friend; I need you for other business; but it is some one you will like. I will tell you. It is Miss Carr from your store, Georgie's sister."

"Good!" "That is nice!" "Ain't she pretty?" were some of the remarks this information aroused.

"This room will be open from half-past six until ten. We are going to get up some things for some of the evenings in the week, that we hope you will all like."

"What am I to do?" said Lucretia.

Her soul thirsted for position.

“I will tell you. This is a very pleasant room, and other people will like to come, and think they can. But it belongs to you cash girls, and to no one else. And we want some plucky, determined girl to insist on this. And we wish you, Lucretia, to look after this matter, and see that only cash girls come. Another thing: if there is any obstreperousness in the room, we wish you, Lucretia, to see that it does not continue, and to keep order.”

Lucretia was decidedly warlike and authoritative in her disposition, and she liked these offices.

“To-morrow night will be Sunday night, and if any of you do not go to church you will probably like to come here.”

There was something very like a titter from Lucretia at the word church.

“And we thought you would enjoy some more music. Miss Trevor and Miss Guernsey will both be at leisure to-morrow evening and will come down with their instruments; and Miss Thomas will also be here. Some of you already know her.”

“ The playin’ and singin’ one ? ”

“ Yes.”

Then they had some more music ; and when Pen, Gertrude, and Miss Guernsey put the room in order after the girls were gone, and then left the room themselves, they all had a feeling that it would be a long time before they would forget that evening.

CHAPTER VII.

AN EMBASSY.

THE Sunday evening experiment passed off very successfully. Pen was anxious to hear whether any thing startling had occurred, but the three girls who had been there claimed to have enjoyed the evening.

“I never realized until last night how much there was we could do, things that would be easier for us to do than for any one else, perhaps,” said Miss Trevor, seriously, to Pen. “The room was full last night. The girls were just as quiet and kind and good as they could be. Of course I expected them to laugh and make fun, and to act awfully; we all thought so; but they did n’t. They seemed very much interested, and anxious to appear appreciative and to understand. Miss Thomas is just fine. I thought she was — well, I never tried to

she speak to her before, and felt sort of put out that you asked her to go last night instead of going yourself; but she took hold splendidly! Don't know what we would have done without her. She seemed to feel so kindly toward all of them, and they knew it. She did the singing; started it, naturally enough. She sang lots of hymns for them, and then asked them which one they would like to learn. They decided on Rock of Ages. She had sung that twice, and do you know, she taught them the first verse! They learned the words, and they learned the tune quickly enough.

"They were delighted. That horrible little McKinney has a remarkably good voice, and she was so interested that I believe she forgot to make any of her dreadful remarks. That Carr girl, Georgie's sister, was there. Isn't she a beauty? Georgie sat on a hassock by her nearly all the evening; she seems fond enough of her. I supposed that there would n't be any thing but singing, for though I thought

of any quantity of things to say, they all seemed so stilted and trite and far-fetched and out of place that I knew I should n't open my mouth to say a thing. You know, I mean something kind of religious; and though I had a vague idea that if I were talking to just one girl by herself I might say truly what I meant, it seemed just a farce to think of talking to all of them. And Miss Thomas did not seem to think of saying any thing. I am sure she did her part like a hero on the singing. And then, while the girls were talking and asking questions about this and that, I suddenly woke up to the fact that Miss Guernsey was talking away to them with all her heart. I never knew her at all before; did not think I would like to. What do you suppose ailed me? She is—well, you ought to have heard her! This thing is waking me up to a sense of the worth and goodness of these girls I see every day. At any rate, I would n't miss it for any thing now.

“Miss Guernsey talked to them in the

most natural way. She found out lots about them. I could have seen all of them every day for a month and not have known what she found out in a few minutes ; and they liked it she did it so nicely. She found out where they all live, and about their families ; she knows who are Catholics and who are not, and where they have ever been to church. That was ever so funny, the answers they gave. Some had been once here, and some there, and they gave their adventures with almost as much gusto as you could have done. And Miss Guernsey did not seem to feel awkward or hesitating or any thing, and they never thought of laughing. She talked to them real earnestly about what kind of women they would want to become, and about doing the best they could every day, and she said that they should not try to cultivate indifference or distaste for what was best. I can't tell you what she said, but I know it made me feel better, and you could see by the faces of those youngsters that they felt earnest

and were glad to be talked to that way. Miss Guernsey was so kind about it, and seemed to say just the right thing so easily. I'll never forget her voice."

The girls were walking up and down the hall. Pen wanted to shake hands with every body.

"Miss Guernsey has such a fine chin and mouth, and such eyes, that she always impressed me as being something beyond the ordinary, but I never knew her much."

Some other girls joined them. A group of girls around Miss Guernsey and those around Miss Thomas both gravitated toward Pen.

"Well, Pen, what next?" cried one girl.

"Plenty," promptly, "and that pretty quick too! Some of you girls shall have a chance to shine in a bright, particular way. Who knows how to sew?"

"Pen, how can you? We all know how to sew!" was the aggrieved answer.

"No, we all don't either, my dear. You, for instance, know as little about it as is

consistent with decency. Your mother does all your sewing, for your mother told me so."

There was a general laugh.

"What do you want somebody to sew for? I can sew, if that is all you want. I was put through such a training from the time I was five, that now I am most accomplished. Plain sewing and darning and mending and that kind of thing. I presume you mean embroidery, though."

"No, it is sewing; just exactly that kind. Miss Black, you have pronounced your doom."

"What do you want?"

"Now we have the reading-room, we have simply won a kind of battle-field. We must do something. Some of us have thought that it would be a very good plan to get a couple of you girls to go there one night a week — Tuesday night, for instance — and show the girls something about neat ways of mending and sewing for themselves. Between us we will stock three or four work-boxes with needles and different kinds of

thread and buttons. That will be a cheap affair. Brass thimbles of different sizes we can get; your mothers will give you the other things, and any kind of a little box or basket will do. We can buy a couple of pairs of scissors, cheap ones, and then those baskets can stay in the room all the time. The general opinion seems to be that it will be a very good plan, and that the girls will be interested."

"I think that is one of the best things yet."

"Those of you who take these Tuesday evenings (you can change among yourselves, and as it will only be once a week we can all stand it, I am sure) — those of you who go can work up to showing them how to cut and make all kinds of underclothes, and then will come dresses, I suppose. You will become greatly interested, you see if you don't. You girls that have n't seen your protégées at all ought to have a chance. Then Friday evening will be a kind of entertainment evening. A couple of us, different

ones as often as possible, will go down every Friday and do what we like to entertain them. Read to them, and get up some music or something, just as we please. And perhaps it would be well to try to give them something to eat when we can."

"Eat! That is you all over, Miss Randolph!"

"Oh, we all do it, you know," apologized Pen.

"Then Sunday evenings somebody must be there."

"If you girls do not mind," said Miss Guernsey, quietly, "I would be very glad indeed to go every Sunday evening. I felt so exceedingly interested last night. And if one or two others would take turns going with me,—girls who can sing,—we could get along very well."

There was a murmur of approval among the girls.

"You are just as good about it as you can be, Miss Guernsey," said Pen, enthusiastically. "I have been hearing how you talked yester-

day. Girls, she is just the best person that could be there."

Miss Trevor expressed her entire agreement with that sentiment. Miss Guernsey reddened, but she looked pleased.

"So that is settled. To-day and to-morrow we must get together the work-boxes. Arrange that among yourselves, will you?"

"Yes; I'll see to one box."

"So will I."

"I'll bring in one to-morrow."

"And I."

"I will buy the thimbles and two pairs of scissors, and have them here to-morrow morning," said Margie.

"And you, Miss Black, will go to-morrow evening, Tuesday, to the reading-room? René will go with you. She said she would be very glad to, and she is a marvelous hand at any such thing. Miss Trevor and I will go down Friday evening, and Miss Guernsey will pick out a coadjutor for Sunday next. There, this week is planned for, and without the slightest trouble."

Pen walked off with Miss Guernsey.

"I appreciate what you did last night, Miss Guernsey. Gertrude Trevor told me about it."

"What a fuss you make over nothing!" said she. "I did n't do a thing."

"Yes, we know all about that. Miss Guernsey, I want to talk to you. Don't you think, when we started the room so easily, and now it is practically on its feet and will run itself, that we ought to have another—get up another? We reach so few girls in this one room, and there are so many."

"What a restless girl you are! Don't you know that it was only by the most curious good fortune that this room was ever started so quickly? Don't you know that the way things ordinarily go we might have been this very day arguing and planning over how and where we should get a room? I never saw any thing rush ahead so smoothly and quickly as this little undertaking has. You certainly won't find it so easy to start another."

She saw Pen looked a little disappointed.

"Now don't mind my saying that. It only seems to me to be good sense. But I will say that I will only too gladly help you in any thing you propose, and that I will join you in what I have noticed you were doing all along, thinking about it, and talking about it to every one. Something will come of it, perhaps, as there has of this last plan."

"Good," said Pen, more cheered. "Let's talk that up to every body, and get all the girls to talk about it. Something will happen surely if we are in earnest."

Pen's meditations took a dollar and cent form. She took her constitutional where she could see the "courts" and "rears" and "places" off Cambridge Street, and she walked down Blossom Street and along Revere Street. She wondered how large the houses were; how much rent they paid; what the rent of a single room was, and so on. She felt quite burdened down by the thought that every body was paying out

money all the time, and that every house represented so many dollars scraped together in one way or another by its various inhabitants.

When Mabel, the dark-eyed, pretty little girl who brought their washing, came to their room that night, Pen was most diligent in her inquiries as to the number of rooms in the house she lived in, and asked how much Mabel's mother paid for her room.

"Two dollars a week. There's a little room offen it."

"You own your furniture, I suppose?"

"Yes 'm."

"That house has four stories, you say, and two living-rooms on a floor. Suppose all the rooms paid two dollars, René, tell me how much that makes?"

"Eight hundred and thirty-two dollars a year. But you know the rooms might not all cost that much."

"Well, I call that an awful heavy rent for an eight-roomed house in that locality. Don't believe we will get a cash-girls' house very soon at that rate."

The next night Pen arrayed herself very carefully in the very best dress she had, for she was going out to tea. She was going to the Arnolds'. Dr. Arnold was the pastor of a prominent church in the city, the one Pen had attended since she had entered college. Dr. Arnold and her father had been class-mates, and she had been made to feel very much at home in the Arnolds' house. They all liked Pen, and Dr. Arnold had a regular set of questions that he asked her when she went there. They were supposed to be calculated to draw out a description of her most recent adventures. Had the good man but known it, Pen would cheerfully have related every thing she knew on the slightest inducement; but he prided himself on his tact, and certainly his efforts were always successful.

"What have you been doing lately, Penelope? What scheme have you had on foot this week and last?" he asked genially at the tea-table, trying vainly to catch the spoon his youngest had deliberately thrown, and which fell to the floor.

"Don't do that, baby."

"Baby *will*," was the obedient reply.

The two other young Arnolds chuckled delightedly over that celebration of American independence, while Mrs. Arnold said, as pleasantly as she would have remarked that it was a nice day : —

"Dear, I always said you would spoil that child."

"That is so, Jennie," with some contrition ; "but I really did not seem able to help his throwing his spoon on the floor."

"Baby loves papa !" asserted the young man, with a seraphic expression.

"Is n't he a darling ? Pen, are you well helped ? Now for your last adventure. We are all waiting."

"It is much the largest one I ever had to tell — really ; and I know you will both be interested, particularly you, Mrs. Arnold."

Pen wondered inwardly how many times already she had told this tale she was about to relate ; but there was some inspiration in having new listeners, and she

dimly saw some good resulting from telling it all over again.

The doctor and Mrs. Arnold listened, asking questions here and there, and Mrs. Arnold would say, "Poor little thing!" referring to Minnie or Georgie. "I never thought about it before." "Yes, yes." "What a beautiful character!" as her admiration chanced to be aroused in behalf of Miss Trevor, Miss Guernsey, or Miss Gower.

Dr. Arnold did not give way to many expressions of interest, but his face beamed with approval.

They talked about the reading-room and different things in connection with that kind of work most of the evening. Pen had an idea come to her.

"Mrs. Arnold, would I be allowed — would it be all right — could I — may I go into one of those meetings the ladies of the church have? a Dorcas society, or mothers' meetings, or women of the church, or whatever those things are you read the notices for, doctor," — turning to the head

of the house, while he laughed at her. "Could I go into one of them and talk about this, and see if the ladies would not be interested in some such thing, personally, even if not as a society. May I?"

"Why, of course! We would like to have you," said Mrs. Arnold. "We would only be too glad to get you in there and hear all about it. We have a very pleasant meeting in the church parlors Saturday afternoons. You come at four next Saturday afternoon, and you can talk as much as you like to wide-awake, active, pleasant women."

"They are so, they are so," assented the doctor.

"I will bring Miss Trevor with me," said Pen, thinking how much more assured she felt going anywhere with Miss Trevor. Miss Trevor's fine face, graceful figure, and dignified manner were always sure to make a good impression.

So it happened that about four o'clock the next Saturday afternoon, Pen and Gertrude put in an appearance at the church parlors.

The ladies had been there since half-past three, and Mrs. Arnold had informed them of the coming visitors.

Mrs. Carncross, the president of the society, met them most kindly, and the girls felt that they should at least spend a pleasant hour there, whatever else happened.

"We have been told, Miss Randolph, a little something of what you girls have been doing," said Mrs. Carncross, "and we are very, very glad that you will tell us all about it yourselves. Now, ladies, if you will, we will hear from our young friends."

So Pen started in again. Nothing but her real interest in what she was telling kept her from being utterly weary of it. But she felt the importance of the occasion, and she told it all.

"It may seem very presumptuous of us — of me," she added in conclusion, "but it seemed to me that I would so like to — that I must — tell what little I know about this to women who lived here in the city, and who were interested in all kinds of work, and who

could perhaps think of something to meet the need; for there is a need, do you not think so? When that girl I told you of, Pauline Carr, said what she did—and she was very much in earnest—about the girl clerks in their store, and of course it is so in other stores, and I thought how it really was,—that these girls, with still a chance of happy, good lives before them, should throw it all away for the lack of a little help and sympathy and advice from those who would be glad to give it if they knew the need,—that they should do the things they do, and lead the kind of lives some of them lead, seems so pitiful and so unnecessary. And it seemed, inasmuch as I so strongly felt it, as though I must say something to women like you, even at the risk of seeming officious and interfering. Some of these girls have no homes, and are dependent entirely on their own efforts; and the tone of the society they live in is not high, and they do have a hard time, and they do have so many, many temptations, and why should n't some one,

some women, do a little to help them when they really are trying so bravely to help themselves?"

Pen's voice trembled the least little bit toward the end; it was a long story to tell, and she had been anxious to tell it well.

"I feel as though this appeal came to us in the name of our daughters, ladies," said the stately Mrs. Carncross, and there was something like a quiver in her voice also. There had been a rumor of a daughter of Mrs. Carncross, who had disappeared years ago; how or why, or whether there was any truth in the story or not, nobody knew. It had happened, if at all, before Mrs. Carncross had come to the city; but more than one lady in the room thought of the old story as they heard her words.

"And what have you thought of, Miss Randolph? We all know you must have thought of several plans, whether you have as yet confessed them or not. This is intensely interesting."

Miss Clark's voice was so live and ener-

getic that it seemed to clear the air. Pen had not thought of any plan, but she was not to be taken at a disadvantage.

“I wonder if any of you see a magazine published in London by the Woman’s Bible Society?” she said. “I remember reading an article in one of the magazines that interested me. Labor is so miserably paid in London. I remember this article spoke of a match-box factory where they employ girls, for the most part, and pay them most miserably. In this particular factory the girls were paid from seventy-five cents a week to three dollars. Nearly all of them, coming from the most miserably poor of London poor, were obliged to live on these wages. You can imagine what it was like. The Bible Society, appreciating the misery of the situation, undertook to help matters.

“They rented a house near this factory. They hired a matron, a young woman and a woman belonging to the same class of people as the girls; of course a good Christian woman. I remember one room was the

kitchen, the girls ate there ; one room was the matron's room ; one room was a general sitting-room. Then there were four bedrooms, with two cot-beds in each room. There was a back shed where they could all do their own washing. The girls paid a nominal sum for the rooms, and they all paid in a certain amount for meals, which at first they cooked themselves, but finally the matron did it for them, as she could do it so much better.

“ Now we really have no girls as demoralized and as used to rough, poverty-stricken existence as the London factory girls. Ours are refined in comparison, and of course better paid. But if it could be done, why would not some such thing be good ? Many of these girl clerks do not live at home. Now, if there could be a house where some of them could live, a house plainly but neatly and attractively gotten up, with a nice large room in which they could gather in the evenings, where they could read and sew, and if the ladies who were interested

in the house would become acquainted with them and try to acquire an influence for good over them, it would be a great thing for them. What the girls paid could be regulated by their wages, and of course they would have to pay as much as they could afford, to preserve their feeling of independence and self-respect."

"That is an excellent idea."

"Several of those houses might do wonders."

"That ought to be taken into consideration."

"We must certainly bear this in mind."

"Even if it should not be feasible to do a thing as large as that at once," said Pen, anxiously, "could not something be done in the way of opening reading-rooms for these girls, these older ones, or for the younger ones too? It would be such a really valuable thing for them. Their evenings are the worst times for them."

The ladies began talking the matter over among themselves. Mrs. Carncross and

Miss Trevor seemed to find each other mutually attractive, and Pen heard Gertrude describing something most earnestly.

She listened to the conversation going on around her, while she was to all appearances wrapped up in the rather tiresome platitudes of an old lady who seemed anxious to make her acquaintance.

"I really think," said a low, energetic voice behind her, "that Mr. Patterson will give us the rent, if he is sufficiently besieged, or at least make it low enough to enable us to undertake it. He owns a whole block right in the very spot where we want a house, and just the right kind of houses; tenements, to be sure, but not in a bad neighborhood, and not so very old. He certainly shall do it now! A man as wealthy as he is! I shall see to it myself!"

"We would not have much trouble furnishing it plainly, if we all helped. How plucky those girls seemed to be! How I have enjoyed this afternoon! Yes, I think it can be done."

"It must go through," replied the first voice, "and we certainly must see to something more in the line of evening-rooms for these girls. We can do it. We are a rich church and rich people, and even if we weren't it would make no difference, not a whit. It is simply sinful, the lofty way we neglect the people around us, and that we women should neglect the *girls*! I believe in helping girls once in awhile, and this is a chance."

Pen's soul swelled within her, and she said with surprising fervor: "Yes, they *could* eat potatoes," in answer to one of the old lady's remarks, but she was thinking of the possible accomplishment of this second and larger plan.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LODGE.

DO you remember what you told me, Mr. Hoare?" said Pen, one day. "I have n't seen you since, and I have been quite anxious to know what happened."

"I don't think it is my fault that you have n't known all about it," said Rodney, laughing. "I never saw any thing like the rush you are in lately — never have time to even look at me. Why, I have waited around for you, and have tried to catch up with you in the street; could n't manage it, though. Really, it just paralyzes me to see you walk!"

"Are you going down to the library? I am. Walk down with me, won't you? What did you do?"

"Well, the fact is, I can't say that I did any thing, but something happened. We

find it interesting, too. Now don't expect very much, or you will be disappointed. Davies and Jones and I made up our minds to get acquainted with some curious-looking little newsboys that we used to see every morning when we walked in. You know Davies and Jones live over in Cambridge, too, and we generally walk in together. It is a fine walk. I believe you would like it. Well, we won our way into their good graces and they were bright and funny enough."

"They are n't dead or any thing, are they? You use the past tense so."

"No; they are all right. I thought it would be more exciting to tell it that way. We talked it up among ourselves, and we got the use of a room for two evenings in the week. We have as many as a dozen or fifteen boys in there every Sunday and Wednesday. First we had them Monday and Thursday, but Davies said it was a shame not to do any thing for those youngsters Sunday. Davies is a first-class hand.

He is great on the moral and religious side ; and Jones — Jones would make you laugh. He is all health and hygiene, and that kind of thing, and funny. The boys greet him with shouts. I believe they swallow every thing he tells them. Barber — W. Barber, not M. N. — has taken hold too. He goes in for amusement. They like him. And then I, why I am the temperance crank, and between us I guess those boys will have a training. Two nights in the week is very little. It makes me sick to think of it, but they seem to like it and they are regular in coming. We have to turn away some of them every night ; that makes me feel bad. One boy is a genius, I believe. He can do any thing with a knife. He made me this little peach-stone basket," showing it on his watch-chain. "I hung it there because I like it. I used to whittle and cut out peach-stone baskets too, but I never thought of making one as well as he made this. We had a stereopticon for them last time. They thought that was great. They are rough,

just as rough as they can be, and bright. I feel interested in every one of the little wretches. You look most uncommonly pleased."

"Can't look so as much as I feel, I know. I think it is just immense — there!"

"I knew you would; that is, I hoped you would. I know how little it is, and so do you; but it is something, is n't it? I have been anticipating telling you all about it. How do the cash girls come on?"

"Quite a good deal has happened since I told you about it last. Some of our girls planned to go down to the room one night in the week and show the girls something about sewing and mending. They say that even the little girls have seemed ever so much pleased with that, and have tried to learn and remember. I can't help thinking that they must be remarkable children. We try to have some kind of an amusement Friday evening, and Sunday evening Miss Guernsey and one or two more always go down, with something the same idea that

you had, I think. Nearly three weeks ago Miss Trevor and I talked to some ladies about what there might be done, perhaps ought to be done, for some of these girls, clerks in the stores; and they seemed so interested, and seemed to think so surely that something should be done that I really thought they would do something; but I have n't heard any thing about it since. We are planning to get another room, and it looks to me as though we soon could. Were n't we lucky about that first room? You have no idea how well it looks and how comfortable it is."

It had been nearly three weeks since Pen and Gertrude had gone on their embassy to Mrs. Carncross and her friends. They had heard nothing further in regard to the matter, and Pen's hopes had daily dwindled.

When she returned to the college that afternoon she found a note from Mrs. Carncross addressed to her.

"Will you kindly come next Saturday afternoon with your friend Miss Trevor to

our church parlors? We have been partially successful in a little plan similar to one you proposed, and we would all like to talk with you young ladies further about it."

Pen was jubilant.

"There, Gertrude, something has happened, surely. Now we must keep our wits about us. I know very well what it will be like. If they have a house, or any thing of the kind, some of the ladies will be sure to look on the plan as giving them an opportunity to 'run' something. And they will be sure, without knowing any thing about it, to consider those girls as persons providentially thrown in their way to coerce, and hedge in, and keep down, and control, and govern. And they will try to put in a rule for this, and a rule for that, and have things done as they would for an orphan asylum or a house of correction. And if they carry the day, the main object of the plan will be frustrated. Now we know this, and we must remember it, and try as far as we can to have this thing done as we would like to have it if you and

I were going to live in the house ourselves. I am willing to use tact, policy, strategy, chicanery, any thing!"

"How you do run on, Pen! Never saw any body like you," laughed Miss Trevor. "I agree with you heartily, and I'll back you up all I can. It does seem as though we acted exceedingly conceited about this business though."

"That is precisely the way it seems to me, but I don't see what else we can do. Don't let us bother about what we seem to act like, if we only keep in view the real thing we are after. Perhaps I have maligned them, but I feel confident that that good old lady who talked to me will want all the girls who live in the house to learn how to knit and to spin and to have their lights out at 7.30 P.M., sharp."

They presented themselves at the church parlors Saturday afternoon in something of this spirit. They were as cordially welcomed as before, and Miss Clark, the energetic lady whom Pen had particularly liked and relied

upon, laid the matter as it then stood before the meeting. Pen and Miss Trevor could hardly believe their ears when they heard her say that they had secured the use of a house for a year.

“It is a fairly good house, and the neighborhood is quiet and respectable,” said Miss Clark. “We expect to accommodate eleven girls: eight girls in four rooms, and three in the fifth. There will then be a large, cheerful room for a sitting-room, a matron’s room, a dining-room, and a kitchen. Then there is a small room for the girl we will have to help the matron. I have the plan worked out to this extent. Thanks to Mr. Patterson and Mr. Davenport we are no longer troubled about the building. Five ladies have made themselves responsible for the five bedrooms; five more for the sitting-room; two for the dining-room, and five for the kitchen. Three ladies will attend to the matron’s and the maid’s room. So you see our house is furnished. Now, naturally, every one here will consider the matron and the maid as the most

trying part of the whole business ; but people were never so fortunate. For some time I have known a most excellent woman who has seen very hard times, poor soul. She has done any kind of sewing that she could get to do, and has done a great deal of plain sewing for me and for my friends, but still she has found it hard to get along. She is one of the best women I know. Honest, kindly, industrious, painstaking, very cheerful, and a real Christian. She would have gone out as a housekeeper or a servant—she has every qualification—but she is a widow with one child, a little girl of six, and the child is a cripple. She could n't leave her. I think she would have endured any thing rather than that, and so far she has never found any one willing to hire her with the child. She is an English woman, and the personification of conscientious economy. She is simply a gem for the place. She will be sure to feel kindly toward the girls, to enter into their plans, and to try to make friends with them. Her name is Mrs.

Cleeves. We are equally fortunate in a maid. There is a young girl of seventeen whom Mrs. Cleeves knows, a girl who has not had a very fortunate or happy life so far, but Mrs. Cleeves likes her, and speaks well of her, and says she would be glad to have her with her, and that she is sure she will do well. We will pay Mrs. Cleeves four dollars a week, and the maid two dollars a week. That, you see, is cheap; almost unnaturally so, I presume you will think, when you consider how servants' wages run in this city. But they both consider themselves very fortunate to get that much; and really it will be a good thing for them. The girls will attend to their own rooms. Mrs. Cleeves and Ann will do the rest. Every thing will be very plain, but as good and attractive as can be got for the money. Mrs. Cleeves showed me plainly that she could run the table on very little money, and have the food plenty and wholesome, by simply not wasting any thing and by knowing what to buy. What the girls pay in for their board will buy the food and pay

Mrs. Cleeves and Ann. Except for the coal, which we will make up among us, if necessary, the enterprise will run itself. It seems to me to be done with very little trouble and very little expense."

Miss Clark's statement roused considerable enthusiasm.

"You seem to have such a business head, Miss Clark," said one lady, admiringly. "I am sure, even if I had had the best intentions in the world, and the matter had been left to me, I should have been wrestling to this hour with the question whether the sitting-room carpet ought to be red or green."

"We know how you always depreciate yourself," said Miss Clark, smiling; "but I must say that this is far from being my own plan. I think our good Mrs. Carncross straightened out most of my ideas for me."

"My dear! my dear!" remonstrated Mrs. Carncross.

"And I must say that we feel very much indebted to Miss Randolph for the little Bible-woman incident she related, which

evidently suggested this plan to us, and which I for one had never read."

Pen mumbled in a shocking manner, but she was so speedily brought to order by Miss Trevor that luckily no one heard her.

"Pen, I'm ashamed of you!" whispered Gertrude.

"All right," pleasantly. "I'll forgive you."

"The next thing," continued Miss Clark, "is to get the proper girls; and here, Miss Randolph and Miss Trevor, we certainly need your help. What can you do for us?"

"I don't—exactly—know," said Pen, slowly; then she brightened. "But I do know who can tell us just the ones. You know I told you about that beautiful girl,—she is beautiful,—Pauline Carr, who superintends our reading-room for us, and who is clerk in Johnson & Purdon's, and who takes care of her little sister so nicely. She, I am sure, will be just the one to talk to. Miss Clark, if you would go to the reading-room

and see her—would n't you like to?—I would go there with you any night if you cared to have me. Perhaps you would enjoy seeing the room and the girls, and I know you would like Pauline. I do hope you will let her and her little sister be in your house."

There were a good many smiles at her earnestness.

"Why not go to-night? Could you go with me to-night?"

"Gladly."

"But what are we going to do about these young women?" asked the old lady who Pen had declared would wish the girls to learn to spin.

Miss Trevor gave Pen an amused glance.

"They are doubtless very loose and wild in their habits, and there ought to be strict rules to which they must conform for their own welfare."

"Yes, there ought to be rules," said another.

"Nothing has been said," the old lady

went on, "about the hour at which these young women should be safely in the house and retire."

"Of course they should be in early," said Mrs. Carncross.

"All girls should be in early," said the old lady, firmly. "Unless properly accompanied they should not be out after dark at all. And these girls will probably need the strictest watching."

"It is meant to be a kind of boarding-house, a home boarding-house," said Miss Clark, "and I don't think too many rules would be consistent with that idea."

"That class of girls needs rules, and stringent ones," said the lady. "You will all admit, at any rate, that they ought to be in bed by nine o'clock?"

"You missed it by an hour and a half," said Miss Trevor, in a low tone to Pen.

Pen felt amused and indignant both, but it was in the mildest way that she ventured:—

"It might be a very good thing for them,

indeed, to be in bed by nine o'clock, but I doubt if girls of eighteen and twenty would care to be told when to go to bed."

"If they did n't choose to conform to the rules of the house they need n't go into it," persisted the advocate of early hours.

"But the house is to be for that kind of girls," was the eager answer. "Girls that would do the right thing naturally and be perfectly amenable to the rules of propriety and fitness, might get along very well, perhaps, in the way they live now. You want to get hold of girls who are a little wild and restless and ready to be tempted by any thing and every thing."

"That is so," said Mrs. Carncross, emphatically. "'I wish you would tell us what you think about it, Miss Randolph; you seem to have thought about it. Now tell us what you have thought."

"I have thought," said Pen, promptly, "that the object of such a house would be to enable some one to get hold of the girls, to exert a good influence over them, to

make a lasting impression on them; and I do not think you should forget what kind of girls they are and what they have been used to. In the first place, they are independent; they earn their own living. They take their bread from no one. They have in most cases never been used to the restraints which girls in better families have been used to. They are quite as independent and free in their actions as boys of their own age. They are used to thinking that their limitations, and they are many, of course, are due to their lack of time and money, and not to some one's right to say that they shall or shall not. Next, they are girls who work hard all day. It is hard to stand up all day long in a close, hot store, or in all kinds of draughts. They must be thoroughly tired when the day is over, and a kind of tired that demands rest, not merely by sleep and sitting still, but by change and recreation. Now if they are out of the store by six they would n't be through their supper and ready to do any thing before seven. These girls

must have to scheme and plan a good deal about their clothes, as they have to look well dressed on very little money. All that work must come in after supper. All their chance for talking and reading must come in then. And it can not be expected that they could go day after day in a crowded, poorly ventilated store and not need any exercise; and their only chance for exercise and seeing other people would be in the evening. I think that if any one would need, or have a right to, a long evening, these girls would. And I think they ought to be treated with the greatest consideration in this regard. I am aware, I think, that it is not the best thing in the world for them to be on the street, and that this free-and-easy street life constitutes their greatest temptation; but I doubt if this can be guarded against by rules so as to be lasting, at any rate. There is where the influence must come in. The girls must find their own sitting-room so attractive that they will like to stay in, or to come in early. They

must receive such attention, such interest and kindly advice, that they will have a keener sense of what they ought to be and of how they should act to fulfill kindly expectations. It will have an effect, I know, on most of them if not on all; while gratuitous restrictions and condemning watching would only rouse their antagonism and make them sneaky or reckless. If this is to be done I think it ought to be done in the way most calculated to work the greatest benefit. As for rules, I think as few as possible would be the best, and let those be ones that the girls can at once recognize the value and justice of. For instance, they ought to be obliged to pay their money on time, strictly. That is common honesty and they will know it. They should be obliged to keep their rooms in good order. It won't be a hard thing to do; they will at once see the necessity of it, and it should be insisted on. They should be obliged to be in before locking-up time, and that time should be set as you would think best after you had

thought over the whole matter. As far as I can see now, I should think that would be all. The object is, is n't it? not merely to arrange some plan by which a few of these girls would act correctly by rule for a short time, but to exert such an influence that they will be better women for having known you long after you have forgotten them, and that they may gain such a real liking for a better way of doing things, of thinking, and of conduct, that they will carry your influence among the other girls they know, whom you would gladly reach directly if you could."

Miss Trevor squeezed Pen's hand, and Pen felt duly assured of her friend's concurrence, at any rate.

"I think you have gone to the root of the matter, my dear," said Mrs. Carncross, "and I am sure all the ladies agree with me."

"I do most emphatically!" said Miss Clark. "That is exactly what I think."

Pen felt as though their mission for that afternoon was accomplished, and listened

blandly without the least sign of disagreement to every thing that was said afterwards.

She was glad that Miss Clark was going to their reading-room with her that evening, and kept wondering what Miss Clark would think of Paul.

"I do hope you will have Pauline and her little sister in your house," said Pen, as she and Miss Clark walked to the reading-room that night.

Miss Clark laughed rather mischievously.

"From what you said, Miss Randolph, I should imagine that this Pauline was quite a model. She would probably not do any thing very dreadful if she were let alone, would she? And the house is rather for those who are 'wild and restless' and generally disreputable and unmanageable, is n't it?"

Pen inwardly confessed herself well hit, but she tried to hold her own.

"The house is to enable you to do the greatest good with the smallest outlay, is n't it? And it is to enable you to do good,

most certainly, to those who are 'wild and restless,' etc. And I doubt if you could do any one thing more telling than to put into the house, in their society, a girl as good and attractive and lovely as Pauline Carr."

"You are n't going to lose a point for lack of any thing to say, are you?" was the pleasant answer. "Yes, indeed, we have all been especially interested in this Pauline Carr, and she shall certainly be invited to take a room in our house. I am quite anxious to see her."

Rather a sudden hush fell over the girls in the reading-room when Pen ushered in the stranger.

"Good-evening, girls. It is so pleasant to see you all here. I have brought a friend of mine here, Miss Clark, to see Miss Carr, and I must introduce her to you."

The girls nodded in a pleased way, and Lucretia gave an audible "Good-evening! A cold night."

Lucretia ousted the occupants of the two chairs near Paul, and Miss Clark sat down

beside her. She was wonderfully pleased with the girl's lovely face and gracious, half-shy way of receiving her. Georgie was sitting on a hassock near her sister, with an open book in her hand. Paul had been sewing.

"I brought Miss Clark here," said Pen, in a low tone, "expressly to talk with you. We want you to help us. It is the most capital thing!"

Paul smiled; she was older and graver than Pen in more ways than one.

Between them they told the whole story: about the house and the five bedrooms and the sitting-room; about Mrs. Cleeves and her little lame girl, and then they told her what they had come for; that they wanted her to suggest the names of nine girls she knew who were not living at home and who would like and appreciate such a place as that.

"Nine," said she, quickly; "I thought you said eleven!"

"Yes, my dear, but I have had such a real

wish that you would accept a cordial invitation to make yourself at home in our building, with your little sister, that I only said nine."

Paul's face flushed; she had had a wish that she too might be able to be in a house like the one they described, but she had thought it was only for the clerks, the older girls, and there was Georgie.

"You will surely come, will you not?"

"I shall be very, very glad to," she said in a low tone.

"Now will you tell us some others?"

"There is one girl," said Paul, earnestly, "I wish you would have, and I know she would be glad enough to go, for she hates the place she boards in. She is quite young, seventeen. She has only been a clerk about six months; she is just as bright and pretty as she can be, and so reckless. She never speaks of her mother, and her father died about a year ago. She is so good to me — has been, and yet — I know where she goes evenings, just for some place to go, and —

well, she worries me. It would be the making of her to be in a place like yours, and to know some one different from the people she knows now."

They talked about this young woman, and Paul spoke of eight others, and in her friendly, thoughtful, gracious way managed to make her listeners interested in every one of them.

An hour passed almost before they knew it, and when Pen and Miss Clark left the room Miss Clark said: "How much we do need this very house we are starting, but how little it is — how little it is!"

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER SUCCESS.

WHAT are we going to do for our girls for Christmas?" said Miss Gower to Pen one day.

"Christmas? That is so. Christmas! I had almost forgotten it. When does it come?"

"Three weeks from yesterday."

Pen laughed. "You are going to take time by the forelock, are n't you? I feel quite relieved. I thought from the way you spoke that Christmas must be coming in a week."

"We always used to do so much for Christmas, and it is so different this year. I feel lost. Some people don't do much about Christmas, any way; but we always did. The boys are all out west, and there will be nothing going on. One thing:

we are going to have Pauline and Georgie Carr out to spend the day, and my mother says she is determined that they shall have a dinner they will never forget."

"What a good woman your mother is! I think that is just splendid, Audrey!"

"Are you going home?"

"No, ma'am. Too poor! Can't go out to Nebraska for two weeks this year. I believe I am booked for Margie's, and I shall have a jolly time — going out to spend the day, you know. But what did you mean about the cash girls? Any plan, have you?"

"Oh, no; I was just wondering if you had thought of any thing."

"No, I had n't. We might do some little thing to show good-will, I suppose. Of course the room will be open all day, and also all day New Year's. I suppose the girls that see our little women oftenest will do something personally. René said that she and the other girls who had been in the sewing-ring were going to try to get them

up some little sewing things that they could have for their own. I don't know just what—don't believe they do yet. And I know that Miss Guernsey and the girls that have helped her are going to give them some hymn-books they like, and are going to give Testaments to some of them. I wonder how it would do to send up a barrel of apples Christmas eve, and let them eat them, or do what they pleased with them, as fast as they liked?"

"Eating!"

"Well, now, I believe that is a pretty good idea; eating is n't so bad, after all."

Miss Trevor joined them.

"Pen, what do you think! I saw Miss Clark last night, and she said to tell all the girls that any one who wanted to go down to the Lodge could go to-day. It is nearly finished. Don't you want to go down?"

"I can go at eleven. Can you, Audrey? Gertrude, you can, I know, and we will stop for René. We must tell the others, and I suppose all the girls will be down some time during the day."

Shortly after eleven the four girls started for the Lodge. The building, even from the outside, seemed to have a fresh, rejuvenated appearance. The curtains that showed gave it an inhabited, home-like air. Inside every thing was as clean as could be. Mrs. Cleeves met them in the hall. She seemed very glad to see them, and proud to show the establishment.

"You would like to see the kitchen first, would n't you? And the dining-room?"

They went down to the basement and found the kitchen shining. The startling newness of the furnishing was toned down by the few previously used things that had been sent in. The dining-room was a cheerful place. The walls were hung with pictures, the table was a substantial, generous affair, and the chairs seemed calculated to stand wear.

"You will want to see my room, won't you? It is a beautiful room! The ladies have been so kind!" she said gratefully.

They went in expecting to give the proper



The child smiled and held up her doll. "Tell the ladies your doll's name, Bessie."—Page 203.

Pen's Venture.



amount of admiration, but they were stopped short by the sight they saw. Sitting on the floor on a bright-red rug, in the sunlight, was a little girl. Her bright hair looked like gold in the sunshine, and stood out all around her head in loose, bewitching little curls and curves.

"This is my little girl," said the woman, with a wonderful light in her eyes; "she is so happy!"

The child smiled and held up her doll.

"Tell the ladies your doll's name, Bessie."

The soft little voice at once rattled off a list of names that made the girls all laugh.

"Josephina Evelina Rosina Rosana Romelda Cleeves."

René sat down on the floor beside her.

"How old are you, Bessie?" She wanted to see the little face closer.

It was a pale, delicate little face, but very pretty, and with a remarkably winning expression.

"Quarter past six, and the dollie, she is lame, poor little thing!" with a comically

solicitous look, showing that Josephina had but one leg. "My poor little lame baby is n't more 'n a year old." She had copied her mother's tone to perfection.

"She had me take the doll's leg off on purpose," whispered Mrs. Cleeves to Pen.

"What were you doing with Josephina when we came in?"

"Josephina Evelina Rosina Rosana Romelda Cleeves," corrected Bessie. "I was getting her ready for the many, many ladies who will come. Will you live in this house and sleep in the doll cribs up-stairs?"

"No; some one else will do that."

"She thinks the cot-beds up-stairs are doll beds," apologized Mrs. Cleeves. "Will you go up and see them? Perhaps you had better look at the sitting-room first."

The girls pronounced the sitting-room a great success. It was evident that the ladies had spared no pains. There was a sewing-machine in one corner, not a new one, but it looked as though there might be some service in it yet.

“Miss Clark said a lady had promised to send a piano in a month or so, after Christmas some time. The lady’s daughter is to have a new one.”

“Won’t that be fine? A piano! It puts our reading-room altogether into the shade, does n’t it? Mrs. Cleeves, you ’ll be nice to the girls, won’t you?”

“I don’t think I will forget that I was their age once, and that I have a little daughter growing up.”

“You will be sure to do, then. We take a particular interest in these girls. How pretty those pictures do look, and the carpet, every thing! Shall we go to the bedrooms now?”

All the bedroom floors were painted a bright dark-red, and there was a strip of bright carpet by each cot. The rooms were clean and bright and airy. There were a couple of pretty pictures in each room and a vase for flowers.

“Won’t they be comfortable though! And the beds are all made up! How clean every thing looks!”

"They are coming in to-morrow, most of them," said Mrs. Cleeves.

"There is n't any reason why this house, the Lodge, should n't be a great success; is n't that so, girls?" was Pen's comment as they heard the house-door shut behind them. "I hope we will get our next room started in good shape."

"I don't see how it is," said Audrey, "that you have spoken of that 'next room' lately as an accomplished fact. As far as I can see, there is not the slightest prospect of our starting another, nor has there been."

"Yes, there has, Audrey. I consider the new room almost as a fixed fact. I don't expect to see it started under a month, but it may be; there is just enough agitation in the water to assure me that it will soon boil."

"Pen, I have always told you not to fool with similes; or is that metaphor, or what? What makes you think we can get up another?"

"It is this way. Miss Brown and Miss Thomas' room-mate spend their Sundays at home, just a little way out of town. Miss Black and Miss Guernsey are quite active members of churches here in the city. The mothers of three of the girls belong to different woman's clubs; some kind, I forget what. Mattie Chester's uncle and father are both very much interested in this plan."

"I think I catch the drift of your remarks about Mattie Chester's relations," said Audrey; "but I don't see the force of the rest."

"Well, it is this way. Miss Brown and that other girl both have Sunday-school classes at home of quite large girls. They have become ever so interested in this general plan, and know all about the need of a new room. Louise Brown and the other girl, — what is her name, any way? — Nan Ellis, say that their girls are willing, and really will, do quite a good deal to help. Nan says that she knows her girls could almost furnish an ordinary room just by

themselves; that is, by seeing that other people helped — people that we know nothing of. As for Miss Black, she says the women in their church have several different kinds of societies, and that one of them, some kind of a relief society, would be willing and glad to give some regular help to such a room as that.

“Miss Guernsey says that some of the ladies in her church are going to get up a room of that kind, so that will be one, any way; but I am talking about another one of ours. And she says that she and a friend of hers have tried to start some ideas of active work of this kind in the Young People's Christian Endeavor Society, and in some way they have all taken hold, and have become interested in this very sort of thing, and the girls will help raise money, or will help in the furnishing, or about any thing we want. The young men are getting up some scheme of their own; I don't know what. The girls whose mothers belong to those clubs say that their mothers have interested

the other ladies of the club in our rooms. There is a room of our kind started already in the South End, and the girls say we are sure of money from those clubs. The two Messrs. Chester are both willing to give something. Now I don't see but that we could not only start one room, but more. If the truth must be told, that is the idea I have. We might as well talk about it now as any time. Come up into our room. It smells of paint, probably, but I guess you can stand that; I have to."

When the girls were comfortably ranged around the room, after having admired and criticized René's latest productions, Pen was urged to go on with her idea.

"I will tell you what I think would be just the thing. We should have a house, or part of a house; I think part of a house would do. We should have a reading-room similar to the one we have now; just a comfortable room. Then we should have a kitchen and have one of those kitchen schools you hear so much about. I don't

know much about them, but from what I do know I should think a full-blown one would be too elaborate and would defeat our purpose. But I know what kind of a thing I think we ought to have. We would need a properly furnished kitchen.

“Of course we would need a woman to run it; though there is no telling what we might do ourselves. A cooking-class could last for two hours, say. The girls in the class would be practically shown how to do the necessary work of a kitchen neatly and quickly. They would be shown how to cook the ordinary plain things: potatoes, rice, different kinds of vegetables, chops, beefsteak, etc. Then they would be shown particularly how to make simple broths and drinks for sick people. I don't mean teach them how to be crack cooks, that isn't it; but they should learn how to do common, ordinary things in a neat, orderly, satisfactory way, that they will probably have to do, whether they know how or not. To learn something about the care of a kitchen, to

keep it nice and healthy, would be a great thing for every one of them. It would be worth much to give them ideas that they could carry away with them and put in practice as they had opportunity to do so. That would be one room; it must be a good big one and should have a table in it to be set in a neat way. I suppose the girls would eat what they cooked."

"It might kill them," suggested Miss Trevor.

"They die hard, or very few of them would have lived past five years old. Then there ought to be a room, made pleasant and pretty too, as a matter of course, where there could be a blackboard and a table for use, and that room could be for another kind of classes. Some woman with a rather scientific knowledge of nursing should go there and talk to the girls about what to do for the ordinary ills that befall most people: what to do for colds, how to nurse a fever, what to do for burns, cuts, bruises; about the general taking care of health. She would tell them how to

dress, and urge them to wear more healthful, easy kinds of clothes. She would talk to them about all sorts of things that they ought to be talked to about. They should be told about things to do for children, things that any body ought to know, but that most people, perhaps, never think of. There would be a fine chance to work in temperance, hygiene, and who knows how much better off the next generation might be for a little solid talking dispensed to these girls."

Pen's audience laughed.

"Now, with just three rooms like that we could accommodate a lot of girls. There could always be fifteen in the reading-room—just to mention a number we are familiar with. Then there could be a cooking-class of ten every night in the week, except Sunday; and the *conversazione* for as many as fifteen, six nights in the week. That would be forty girls, would n't it? I don't mean that the cooking-class would be the same ten every night. Each class could have one night a week. That would make sixty girls

in the kitchen every week. Then there need only be one evening for each of the classes in the other room. Think how many that would make!"

"Pen, you may just stop! You are growing worse and worse every minute! That famous damsel counting her chickens was nowhere beside you. You do very well till you get started on numbers. The plan is first-rate, but I think it is pretty steep. Just for looks, or sound, let's cut it down a little; say you have two cooking-classes a week, of different girls, and two *conversazione* classes, as you call them," said Audrey.

"Those that were n't in the reading-room could be in the classes, and those not in the classes could be in the reading-room," put in Gertrude.

"That gives me a chance to breathe," said Audrey.

"All right," assented Pen, meekly. "But the idea remains the same. Talking any thing over makes it seem twice as clear and easy to me. I vow that shall be started be-

fore Christmas. There is n't the slightest reason why it should n't be."

"We will back you up, sure! Go ahead, Pen! Good luck to you! Good-by; good-by, René!" and Audrey and Gertrude departed.

Pen did not intend that her rather startling statement should be an idle threat. There was some method in her madness. She began to plan seriously and to think when her start had better be made.

"It's queer, queer as can be," she thought to herself that night as she and René sat before their open fire, while René was writing letters. "I don't do a thing in these plans, really not a thing. I don't give any money. I don't do any of the work. They all do twice what I do, and yet I seem to get the credit of it, some way. It's a mean shame! The only thing I do is start. Any of them could start if they only thought so. It is queer, most uncommonly queer!"

She had been looking every day for a place that would be suitable for this new scheme.

She wanted the rooms to be in a tolerably respectable quarter, and yet not in a locality where the rent would be too high.

She and René were out one afternoon, and, seeing a sign pasted in the second-story windows over a bakery: — “TO LET, UNFURNISHED. INQUIRE BELOW,” — she walked straight into the store. She made the inquiries, stating her wishes bravely, and a comfortable, cheerful-faced woman, the “care-taker,” and sister of the baker’s wife, took them up-stairs.

“There’s three nice rooms,” she said. “Just beautiful!”

At the magic word “three” Pen felt a sudden conviction that they had found the place.

The front room was certainly all that could be desired. The room that René thought would do for the kitchen seemed very suitable, but the third room looked a little small.

“Pshaw, Pen, that is big enough, I am sure,” said René; and Pen was inclined to curtail her notions, and to think so herself.

"We ought to have this, René. I intend to get the refusal of it till to-morrow noon."

René looked rather astounded.

"I have heard something about paying a dollar to make them keep it open. I don't know what, exactly, but I am so sure that I am going to leave a dollar."

Pen felt like a thorough woman of business.

"Who is the agent to rent this?"

"Mr. Sipps, the baker down-stairs. He is the owner's agent, miss."

Pen interviewed Mr. Sipps and secured the refusal of the rooms until the next noon.

She felt a little at sea when she left the store, but she speedily revived herself with a new idea.

"This is getting exciting! Now we shall go to Mr. Chester."

They went to the place of business of Chester & Son, coal-dealers, and met Mr. Chester just as he was going out. He recognized Pen immediately.

"Bless my soul, Miss Randolph! You

are coming to see me! And your friend, Miss Granger! Oh, yes; certainly, certainly, I have heard of her. Come in. Take seats, ladies. What will you have?"

"It's just this, Mr. Chester. I have come to you to know what to do. Mattie tells me every little while the messages you send about our reading-room, and about starting another. And we are starting another, but I have gotten into it a little quicker than I supposed we should. Now we are sure to have money to rent the rooms — three we want." And Pen gave a fine array of names of women and of societies who had agreed to help. "But of course," she went on, "we could n't actually get any money from them within a week. Now I have been thinking this thing ought to be started as soon as possible, and have been looking for rooms, and this afternoon we found just the thing. Three good rooms, in a good locality, over a bakery — the rooms, not the locality, over the bakery. And I got the refusal of them till to-morrow noon. Now don't you

think that is all right, when we have such reason to be sure of the rent?' I wanted to come to somebody that knew."

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Chester seemed to enjoy the situation heartily. "I shall go right down with you this minute to look at those rooms, and if they suit we will settle this business up to-night. Certainly, certainly."

They did go down, and Mr. Chester did finish up the business, paying part of the rent in advance.

It was a startling piece of news Pen had to tell the girls the next day.

"Hired already!"

"Those rooms?"

"My uncle!"

"Did I ever!"

"What are you going to do now?"

"We must mean business now if we never did before," was Pen's delighted answer. "There are lots of the girls to see. I saw Miss Brown last night, and she despatched a note to the girls of her

Sunday-school class immediately. She says we can depend on them."

"What do you want me to tell my mother? You know she said the ladies in her club would be glad to do something."

"Do you suppose they would be good for the kitchen?"

"I should n't be surprised."

"Well, tell them. Ask your mother if they will see to the ordinary furniture of the kitchen — stove and table and two or three chairs. They will do a good deal if they will do that."

"And my mother said that she would see that something was done. Her friends are willing to do quite generously, I imagine, from what she said, you know."

"Perhaps they would get the other things for the kitchen, for the cooking-school."

"If they are to get those things you would find that you saved yourself some bother and trouble by making out a list of just what you want."

"My, oh! I don't know what we want!" said Pen, rather appalled.

"Talk it over with some one that does know, and give me the list."

"All right, I will. What convenient affairs the mothers of you girls are! Miss Cole, you said your mother had interested some ladies in this plan and would do something."

"Yes; tell me what you want."

"A blackboard, a table, and ten or a dozen common chairs for the third room."

"What are you going to do for the reading-room?"

"I trust to the two Sunday-school classes for that."

"You know I told you that the girls and young women in our church would be very glad to do something."

"We will need their help, I think, in more ways than one. We must have some one to run the cooking department, and some one for the health and common-sense department, and some one also for the sewing, as in our old room. We will need money to pay for the things the girls cook, though I

think that will be paid for by what the girls pay in for the use of the room, if they pay any thing. Then, largest of all, we must pay the rent."

The girls seemed to be rather oppressed by that remark.

"That will be the rub."

"The rent will amount to a good deal."

"Perhaps you have been rather precipitate."

"I hope we can raise it, I am sure."

"What is your plan about it, Pen?" said Miss Trevor.

"To tell the truth, I have hardly thought about it until this minute. I have simply thought that it would come some way. But I have an idea just the same. We will count it all up. See how much ought to be paid in to make us square on the rent; in small sums, I mean, so that it will not be irksome to any one. There are quite a number of people, ever so many, who are interested in this, and willing to do something. These people have all become interested through

some of you girls. We will make out papers, after we know what we want, asking these ladies, or girls, or clubs, or meetings, or whatever they may be, to pay so much a month toward the rent; and have it just a little sum. Then the girl who knows the person in question will ask her to take the paper and attend to it, and the girl will be a sort of collector, and make it her business to see that we have the money in time. If we arrange it carefully I don't believe we will have much trouble."

"That is first-rate," said Gertrude. "I don't quite understand it, but I see the drift of your remarks, and you can explain further in private."

"How about the girls who will undertake the cooking, hygiene, and sewing? It seems to me as though you had already availed yourself of most of the talent among us."

"No, we have n't either. There are lots of girls here who would be glad to do something, but have n't had much chance in the other room. There is Miss Hartt,

for instance." She spoke at random, but she looked at Miss Hartt with a smile.

Miss Hartt was rather older than most of the girls. No one knew how old, and she did not seem to have made any friends. She had not been asked to do any thing for the other room, though she occasionally inquired how things were going, and seemed to feel an interest in the plan.

"I have been thinking," she said slowly, "that I might do something in this if there is any cooking. I think I could do what you want in that line if your plan is to have something like the ordinary cooking-schools you hear about. I think I would do. I am very busy, but I could take one class a week in cooking. I would rather give Monday night."

"That is first-rate! Think of having one of the cooking-nights, the very hardest thing to arrange for, I thought, off our hands! Now I know we can find some one else."

"I know you can, too," said Miss Guernsey, "and I know who. A friend of mine in

our church has had two or three courses in these cooking-schools, and knows all about them, I think, and I know she would take one class a week. She would rather give Wednesday, because we talked about it, and she said so."

"Fortune favors the brave. I am glad we don't have to arrange for six evenings," said Pen, looking at Miss Trevor.

"We may have to, yet," was the answer. "My expectations grow enormously."

"I know a woman, a young woman," said Miss Black, "who is just as good as she can be. She wanted to do something a good while ago, and she went to a training-school for nurses, though she didn't intend to be a nurse. She goes around a great deal among poor people, and she is just as interested in such things as she can be. I know she would take one or two classes a week in the common-sense style, if you would like to have her."

There was a general laugh at that remark.

"I believe Pen only has to open her

mouth and every body manages to accomplish wonders in her behalf," said one girl. "I don't intend to countenance it any longer."

"Nor I," said Pen. "I want to see your notes on that last lecture, and I'll go with you, my pretty maid;" and the two walked out.

"How easily these things seem to move!" said one girl, as she screwed and unscrewed and shook an intractable stylographic pen. "I wonder if you have noticed how much the cliques in the college have been breaking up lately? I approve of cliques; at least, I have nothing against them; but it is surprising, and enough to make one think, perhaps, that the girls have seemed to take more interest in each other apart from class and society. And there is more life and enterprise in an outside way; don't you think so? I can remember Pen's first remarks on this subject in prayer-meeting. I rather liked them, but I only thought that they were a sort of Wednesday noon outburst,

and that though honest enough, they did n't mean any thing to be put into execution now. This having something to do for others, that really need a little help, has been a great thing for more than one girl here, whether she knows it or not. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do," was her friend's answer.

CHAPTER X.

TED AGAIN.

I AM so glad it's you! I thought you were never, never coming! Are these your skates? My!"

Ted did not pretend to keep still. He skipped first on one foot and then on the other; he felt the skates, and tried to carry Pen's hand-bag. His bright hair under his close-fitting little cap flashed from one side of the pavement to the other all the way home.

"Ted, it is n't fair! You have n't seen me for nearly a week, almost a whole week, and you have hardly paid me a particle of attention."

"O Margie! But I have n't seen Miss Randolph for a year, I think it must be; and O Margie, I have the loveliest Christmas present for you; you never saw how lovely it is! Now, don't guess, please, don't guess,"

bobbing up and down before her. "Yes, you may guess, too, if you only won't guess right. Yours is just exactly as lovely, Miss Randolph," anxiously. Then his tone grew more insinuating, "What did you bring me?"

"Ted!" said Margie, severely.

"That's what mamma said — 'Ted!' She said, Miss Randolph, that you would n't bring me a thing for a Christmas present, and not to expect it, she said; but I just thought to myself that you would, you know. You understand about what boys like. Did you, Miss Randolph?"

"See here, young man, I have secrets about Christmas time, and I never tell what I know to any body."

"Oh!" Ted did not seem at all displeased.

Rob and Louis were coming to meet them. They were such straight, tall boys that it was a pleasure to see them. They took the girls' "traps," and then walked on with Margie, who, as usual, was in an increasing hurry to see her mother. The three years of weeks

that she had been in college had not lessened her anxiety to get back on Friday night, or her dismay at having to leave early on Monday. Now they were coming back on Thursday night, but the time had seemed even longer to her.

“Mamma, she’s brought her skates! And she’s brought me a Christmas present; at least, I think she has! Mamma, indeed, I didn’t ask her to get me one, did I, Margie? I said, ‘Have you got one for me?’ And I told her every word you said, indeed I did, mamma, and can we go skating to-night? I’ve never been in my whole life skating at night, and Louis has, and Rob has, mamma! And is supper very nearly ready?”

“Ted, dear, I’m afraid you will frighten Miss Randolph.”

“Ho!” said son Theodore, scornfully, “she don’t get frightened so easy. You ought to see her skates! Please won’t you show ’em to me now? Unless it’s exactly supper-time, I really can’t wait.”

So Pen exhibited her skates. Ted tried

them on, regardless of size, ran his finger down the edge of the runner, worked the lever, spelled out the patent, and enjoyed himself.

Rob and Louis were also interested in the skate question, and retiring to a back shed brought in their skates. Ted immediately disappeared to get his. A month ago he had been inordinately proud of his skates; they were old ones of Rob's, strap skates. They had been used by Louis, and had been pronounced to be plenty good enough for Ted. But his pride had dwindled. It was with something nearly approaching embarrassment that he exhibited his sorry-looking skates.

Pen had an idea. She found out by inquiries cautiously put that no one was going to give Ted a pair of skates. She remembered admiring a little pair of skates in the city only a short time before. She wrote, ordering the skates, mailed the letter that night, and knew that they would be down the next day in time for Christmas.

Rob and Louis decided that it was rather

cloudy that night to go skating, and that it would be much better to go Friday night.

"That will be Christmas-eve, you know, Ted, and that will be jolly!"

Ted was not convinced.

"If I could go to-night," he said, "I could sit up late because I'd be skating, and then I could do as I pleased to-morrow night, because it'll be Christmas-eve, and then I could sit up late Christmas night, and that would make three nights, and now I'll only have two nights."

After supper, when they were all gathered around the fire-place in the sitting-room Mr. and Mrs. Harding asked for the chronicles of the reading-room.

"I don't think very much has happened lately," said Pen, "except in connection with the new rooms, and Margie has told you all the news in that direction, I suppose. One of the girls has an uncle in the country and he is going to send a barrel of apples for the reading-room. I suppose the little cash girls will not object to that."

"How is that McKinney girl, that Lucretia McKinney? She was such a curious specimen, from all Margie told us! We have n't heard any thing about her lately."

"Lucretia?" laughed Pen. "Is n't there some sort of a rhyme that

'A raging, roaring lion of the lamb-devouring kind,
Reformed, and led a meek, submissive life'?

Lucretia has n't exactly done that, but she is a wonder to me. Come now, Margie, don't you run her down. I know nearly all the girls think she is dreadful; and she is, I suppose. You are all unprejudiced, I think, if we count out Margie, and I would like to lay the case before you. Margie has probably told you the exact state of things in regard to Lucretia. Her remarks have become by-words among us, and those of the girls who know very little about the reading-room all know considerable about Lucretia. You know we expected that Lucretia would make us a lot of trouble in the reading-room, but she has n't; she has been a help. She pines

for — notoriety, I guess. She is always saying and doing things to make others stare at her and be surprised at her, and she longs to be thought important and necessary. She really has a great desire for approval, though it does n't seem so. But she has found that she has won more approval and admiration among her friends for doing and saying things she ought not to have said or done, than for doing those things she ought to have done. This false standard of hers has been principally, I think, what makes her so appalling. Now in the reading-room, giving her a little something to do in the way of keeping order and overlooking the other girls has just suited her. That amount of advance beyond the others has acted as balm to her troubled soul, and she has not abused her trust. I have n't heard any complaints, and Pauline Carr has said that she is very good. Now if some one else who would have seemed more suitable had been given that position Lucretia would have been just about ungovernable. She would

have done exactly as she pleased, and I presume would have paralyzed every body.

“Then I don’t suppose we would ever have gotten hold of Lucretia Sunday evening, if it had n’t just happened so. She has heard the girls and young men she has seen laugh and make witty remarks about ‘psalm singing’ and ‘doing the pious,’ and I suppose Lucretia looked with a fine scorn on any thing of the kind. But the first Sunday evening that the girls went down there the room was still a great novelty, and Lucretia wanted to be there. You know they sang most of the evening, and Lucretia has a remarkably good voice, and I believe she is fonder of music and singing than of any thing else. To hear the music and be taught something to sing, and to have her voice admired, was delightful to Lucretia, and she was more anxious to be there Sunday evenings than to be there any other evening. And no one could be more fortunate in talking to girls than Miss Guernsey. She is a genius at it. She does not rouse their

antagonism ; she presents ideas and questions to them in such a natural, kindly way, that they are practically unprejudiced listeners. And she puts things in such a clear, plain, common-sense light that the girls feel equal to the situation, and not on a lower intellectual plane than they should be to understand her. Miss Guernsey takes such interest in them that she can hardly help being successful. Lucretia has taken quite an active part in these Sunday evening meetings, aside from the singing. That is Lucretia all over. She would have to be active in some way. She might be a very disturbing element, or, as has been the case, her sympathies and coöperation might be enlisted, and she would be quite a help. She wants to be thought well of, and wants the approval of Miss Guernsey and the others who go there. She particularly admires Miss Trevor. I believe she would do almost any thing for Miss Trevor. Miss Trevor's reserved, rather cold manner seems to fascinate Lucretia in a wonderful manner. Gertrude has grown

to have a real liking for the girl. Gertrude's sister has a Sunday-school class in their Sunday-school, and Gertrude, by I don't know what chicanery, arranged that Lucretia should enter that class. Gertrude's sister is older, and if any thing more distinguished looking than Gertrude, and Lucretia is perfectly satisfied with her. She, Lucretia, is appalling, you know. She—well, that is natural to her, but I think it is surprising to see how she has improved. Now, I will tell you one thing she did. You know she is only twelve or thirteen, I forget which, but she is a tall, large girl, and no one would think she was younger than fourteen or fifteen. Still she is younger, and I think that makes this thing seem all the more odd. She said she wanted to have a Sunday-school class. As she knows next to nothing, such a remark would only lead to her being laughed at. She is very fond of children. She got together five or six children, poor, ragged, disconsolate little wretches, all under six years old, and mostly boys, for she likes



Lucretia got together five or six poor, disconsolate little children all under six years old, and formed them into her Sunday-School class.—Page 236.

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boys better than girls, she says. She got them out of some back alley near the reading-room. She has them in the reading-room every Sunday afternoon, and you would be surprised to hear her. I went down a couple of Sundays ago to see her class. She teaches them in a unique and curious way, but she interests them. She makes them call her 'Miss McKinney,' and they think she is a miracle of wisdom and goodness. She is kind to them, there is no doubt about that. She teaches them the funniest things in the most earnest way. I believe she tries to remember every word Miss Guernsey and Miss Trevor say, for their benefit; and sometimes, you know, it does n't sound appropriate. She teaches them to sing, and I think it is one of the best things that has happened in the reading-room; and it is one of the things that seems to me to show how much good such a place as that can do. Does n't it seem a strange thing that in so short a time a girl of Lucretia's stamp and apparent tendencies should be trying just as

hard as she can to help others worse off than she is?"

"I think it is one of the most remarkable things I ever heard!" said Mrs. Harding. She was about to say something else, when there was a scream and a sob from up-stairs. Ted had been sent to bed some time before, and his doting mother recognized the voice of her youngest.

"Teddy, darling, what is it?" she cried, running out the open door and up-stairs.

Teddy was sitting at the head of the stairs, rubbing his eyes and whimpering.

"Run right back to bed, dear! My poor baby! I know you'll have the croup this very night!"

She carried him off. Rob went up-stairs to hear what was the matter, and came down shaking with laughter.

"Oh, dear me, what do you think?" he said. "Ted is so mad! He said he went to sleep and dreamed a 'beautiful, beautiful dream.' He dreamed that he was skating out on the river to-night, and that there was

a big red bonfire, and moonlight, and stars, and that he could skate like every thing, better than every body else, and that he could do all sorts of skating, and wheel, and cut circles, and jump, and every thing, and that then he woke up, and he was n't skating, and there was n't any bonfire, and he was only in bed, and he was so mad he just yelled ! ”

Every body laughed, and Mrs. Harding returned, having restored a modicum of peace to her son's mind.

“ Go on, do,” she said to Pen, “ and tell more about this Lucretia and her class.”

“ They were ragged, cold little things,” said Pen, “ and dirty ; and, do you know, René found her, the next sewing-night after her first class, trying to cut down a worn-out pair of stockings of her own for one of those children. René said it made her feel awfully. We had Lucretia find out something about the children, and then we asked all the cash girls who go to the room, if they would not like to have the money that they have paid in for the use of the room go toward doing some-

thing for these children. They all seemed as pleased as could be with that idea. I think they are real generous. So several of the girls, the cash girls, planned what to get, and Lucretia was, of course, at the head of it. They bought quite a lot of things for these children, and they even wanted to sew for them. They bought some flannel and stuff, and René cut them out some little blouse waists and a couple of little dresses for the girls, and they actually made those things themselves. They certainly have made a great change in the appearance of the children. Two of the boys had mothers who were so much gratified by the attention to the boys, for all they are dirty, horrid, shiftless women, that they have kept them looking neat and nice. The two little girls are kept in tolerably good order, too, — much better than before, — and the other two at any rate are warmer, and their clothes are not taken from them."

Mrs. Harding every few minutes looked from one member of the family to another, and nodded with delight and approval.

"Now," continued Pen, "for all Lucretia is a terror in her own way, don't you think she does pretty well? She works hard all day long, and nearly supports herself. She spends most of her evenings in a quiet way — playing games, even reading lately, sewing on her own poor little rags, or even sewing for some one else. Sundays she goes to Sunday-school regularly, is beginning to go to church under the solicitations of Miss Trevor, has a class of poor children in the afternoon, and attends a meeting in the evening — the room-meeting, you know — and takes an active part. I know my Sundays don't begin to be so well filled up. But how she would shock you, I expect, if you were to talk with her half an hour, or less!"

"What do you do for a supervisor, now that Pauline Carr has gone to the Lodge, as Margie tells me?"

"We did n't know what we should do at first. The girls are so quiet and orderly that we don't have any one there the sewing-nights and the entertainment nights and

Sunday evenings. And then, as the Lodge is quite near our reading-room, Pauline comes the other nights; or, if she does n't come, she delegates some one of the cash girls in turn to take her place. It is esteemed a great honor."

"How is little Minnie Lee?"

"She is such a nice child! She is a favorite of Margie's. René particularly likes her also. I don't believe she has a very pleasant time at her aunt's. Her aunt is good enough, but her uncle does n't like to have her there, and when it is her school quarter and she has to be in school, I doubt if she enjoys herself much at home. He does n't object to her so much when she is in the store and brings home her wages. About the other girls? There is Kate. You would like Kate. She is the most cheerful child. Cheerfulness seems to be her mother's strong point, no matter what comes, and the children share it. Kate is making an apron for her little sister that she is so fond of. Her mother thinks Kate

is a wonderful seamstress. And there is Biddy. She is an honest, stupid girl. We have every one of us grown to like Biddy and her wide mouth. And Sairy and Mary Haffey. Mary Haffey, you know, is Lucretia's fag. She is just as much under Lucretia's thumb as ever, but I imagine Lucretia has a better effect on her than formerly. Lucretia never gets tired of her joke that Mary Haffey is a conversationalist. She asks her opinion about every thing, and simply gloats over her inability to answer."

"How about the new rooms?"

"Greatest success in the world! aren't they, Margie? Mrs. Harding, you certainly must come and visit those rooms! They will be one of the sights of the city in a short time, I think. I went down there Monday night, last Monday night. You know any one can go to those rooms. The girls are mostly clerks, to be sure, because we knew that kind; but they can bring any one they please, and any girl from around in that section where the rooms are can

come. The reading-room last Monday was pretty full. Some of the girls were talking, some were reading, some were sewing. They all seemed delighted with the room, and seemed to feel at home and comfortable. Miss Hartt was having her cooking-class. She had about seven. She said she could n't manage more than seven at first. That friend of Miss Guernsey was having a common-sense class. There were eleven girls in there, every one of them just as interested as could be. That is going to be a fine thing, I think, and very useful as it grows. There is to be a sewing-class. That will be held in the reading-room."

"Only think, Robert," said Mrs. Harding to her husband, "that all this has been started since Miss Randolph was here last with Margie. Only think of it!"

"I know it," said Mr. Harding. "I have been thinking about it all the evening. The energy of young people is something remarkable, and if properly directed might accomplish wonders. When we learn to

avail ourselves of all the purpose and perseverance and ingenuity there is lying around uncalled for in the youngsters in our communities, we can expect to see things fly."

The next morning Ted began at the breakfast-table: "Miss Randolph, you will come right off to the river, won't you? If you will I'll tell you about my dream that I had last night. It was the most beautiful, beautiful dream! And, do you know," with insinuating frankness, "if you would really like to have me, I will tell you my other dream. I have it often. It is a very funny, funny dream."

Rob and Louis were chuckling, and his admiring parents smiled consciously.

"I would like to hear your dream very much," said Pen.

"I thought you would," modestly. With a fork well loaded with potato suspended in the air, he detailed his dream.

"I dreamed I was in an orchard of beautiful, beautiful trees, and they were full of

red apples like — like lighted red lanterns. There came a great white cow down in the orchard. The cow went past me, and he took off his hat to me, and he looked just like papa. Then he went to the biggest tree, the cow did, and he climbed it; he clumb right up it, and he picked a lot of the apples, and put 'em in his pockets, and he clum — clam — climbed down again. I laugh every night about that dream. Was n't it a funny one?"

"Very."

"And now you 'll go skating, won't you?"

"Yes, sir; I should like to."

She found that going skating with Ted was no light matter.

"You will help me put on my skates, won't you, Miss Randolph? They are awful hard to strap. Las' time I went," in an aggrieved tone, "the boys would n't help me one tiny, little bit, and I worked, and worked, and worked over the old things, and I just got 'em on in time to stand up and fall down awful hard, when the boys made me take

them off, 'cause it was time to go home. If I had n't 'a' had my curls cut off, I 'd 'a' cried like forty. I promised I would n't if they were cut off. I did cry *some*, but no great 'count."

She fastened on the little skates, and he watched with admiring eyes the easy way her own went on.

"You jes' fix that clamp so, and the little knife that way, and yank the rod, and it's done, solider 'n a rock. What fun! Now you'll take hold of my hand, won't you? You see, I wobble awful just at first."

Contrary to her usual custom, Pen managed to be very patient. She steadied him, and encouraged him, and explained to him, till finally she had the pleasure of seeing the slender, graceful little figure, with his bright hair blown back, and a confident, happy smile on his flushed face, skate quite a little distance erect and steady, and not bent nearly double, as had been his custom.

"Good, Ted! Keep it up! You'll make a skater yet! If your skates were fit for any thing I believe you would do pretty well."

He was intensely proud and grateful.

"O Miss Randolph, when are you coming to live with us? I suffer *fearful misery* without you! I really, truly do. Mamma said she would give you the dog, the puppy, you know, if you'd come. And you could make molasses candy. And we're a lovely, cultivated, religious family. I heard a lady say so."

"You are very kind to ask me, Ted."

"I say," said Ted, at the table, in an excited tone; he had been so anxious to begin that he had nearly strangled during the blessing. "I say, we had an awful good time this morning! Miss Randolph is a bully skater!"

"Ted!" remonstrated his mother, "I have told you not to use that word."

"Well, she is a bang up skater, any way," persisted Ted.

"Theodore!" said his father.

"Well, she's a dumb good skater."

"That word is quite meaningless in that connection, Teddy. Why not just say 'a good skater'?"

"O mamma! how can you?" indignantly.
"Why, *I*'m a good skater, and she — why, she would be clean out of sight around the bend while I was a-huntin' around after the one of my legs that always goes backwards! Why, she's a rotten good skater!"

"He ought to be sent from the table!" said his father.

"O papa, not the day before Christmas, would you? You just ought to see her skate, and you'd know the way I feel about it!"

Paternal gravity could n't resist that, and every one else had been laughing for some time. Rob and Louis were delighted at the skirmish.

If Pen had won a friend in Ted before, he became unalterably devoted Christmas morning. His presents were strewn around the floor, and he had been in raptures over them. He turned to Pen.

"Where's the thing you meant the night you came?"

"That was a pocket-book," and she handed

it to him. He examined it in all possible lights, and pronounced himself very much pleased.

"I thought of something else you might like, though, after I reached here, and it is over there in that box."

The box was promptly opened. When he saw the shiny, nickel-plated skates without straps, he grew red and white, grasped the skates, ran over to the sofa by his mother, and hid his head in her lap. When he was induced to raise his head, he said:—

"I never, never, *never* was so happy!"

Pen enjoyed her visit and her Christmas throughout. As she went into the city on Monday, she wondered what other people had done. She wanted to hear how Pauline and Georgie had fared, and how the day had gone at the reading-room. She wondered how René had enjoyed herself at her friend's. She anticipated telling all her own adventures, and she knew that Ted's performances would take her more time to relate than any thing else.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RECEPTION.

THERE was considerable excitement in the college among the girls who were interested in the reading-rooms. The year was drawing to a close. It would only be a very short time till Commencement, and then the majority of the girls would leave the city. Pen had been talking to her friends about having some kind of a gathering where they could see all the girls who attended their rooms.

"It would be a nice thing," said one of the girls, "but I don't see how we are going to do it. Of course they could n't get into any of the rooms. They are full now."

"We will find a place in some way," said Pen the hopeful.

She had this in view when she went the next evening to the Arnolds'.

She had not been there to tea since the time she was there before the Lodge was started.

"Penelope, you have treated us very shabbily," said Dr. Arnold. "This is only the third time you have been here to tea this year! I intend to write to your father about you, seriously."

"If you tell him also that I have been to dinner about six times, and that I have spent a good many hours here with the children afternoons, I think he will consider me quite justified."

It was not very long before the conversation turned on the Lodge and the reading-rooms.

"We are so anxious," said Pen, "to have all the girls that go to our rooms together, before college closes, and we will have to be pretty quick about it too, things do crowd so toward the end. I wanted to ask you, Mrs. Arnold, if you could suggest any thing. We would like to have a kind of reception, and have refreshments and some music. Those

of us who are going away would like to have an opportunity to say good-by to them all, and we want to get up an evening that they all can remember pleasantly, and where they themselves can see just what has been done, and how many have been attending the rooms. I think we would like to have something like a church social. You have the nicest ones I ever went to."

"My dear," said Dr. Arnold, "I wonder if arrangements could not be made to let these young women have the use of the chapel and church parlors for an evening, as we do for the social?"

"Good! Do you think we could? Really? Would n't ask for any thing better."

"I think so, if you do," was Mrs. Arnold's answer. "This can be seen to. Our ladies are staunch defenders of the faith in regard to reading-rooms. You are sure of their coöperation and aid. I have no doubt they will enter into it heartily, and supply the refreshments, as they do for our own socials; and they would be glad enough to see all the Lodge girls there."

Before Pen left that evening, Mrs. Arnold said she would let her know by note about the parlors, and Pen very confidently assured René that they were safe on the reception question.

Word did come that they could have the parlors, and also that the ladies would furnish the refreshments.

The Lodge girls were invited, and were told to bring every friend that they had taken to their own reading-room evenings. All the girls who went to number 40 Hanover Street, all the girls in the cooking and common-sense and sewing classes, were invited, and also all the girls who were in the habit of going to the reading-room.

"It will make a good many," said Miss Trevor.

"Indeed, it will!" said Miss Guernsey. "And there are as many as sixteen of us who want to be present and will be there."

"And five or six of the church ladies will be there. Dr. Arnold is coming in during the evening," said Pen; "and then Mr. Hoare

and Little Harkness, Joe Hill and Mr. Davies, are going to be there in the interests of music. How is that! Your quartet will bring down the house!"

"The violins will, you mean. We ought to have an orchestra. I wonder one was never gotten up."

"The cash girls are going to do the serving. They are delighted. Ever so many of our girls have made themselves responsible for a white apron and a little cap. Of course there is n't much use in it, but it helps please, and will make them look cuter, and may stir up more interest in them; and then in the way it is being done it will not be a bit of trouble." Pen seemed almost apologetic.

"I heard something about a request of Lucretia's in this matter."

"That is so, and I think it is a good idea. Miss McKinney wishes to have her class attend, and that class will be the most amusing thing there. She has seven children in her class now; five of them boys, and all little. She wants to have them sing. She is

as proud as can be of their singing. And I think it will be only fair to let her do as she pleases. She has taken the greatest pains with them."

"Now, I think that is real nice," said Miss Baker. "I am glad they will be there. Miss Thomas has trained five of those cash girls so that they sing wonderfully well together, and they are to sing."

"That is fine!"

"There will be enough going on that evening. How will it be arranged?" asked Miss Trevor.

"We ought to have the rooms ready by half-past six," said Pen, "and I don't doubt that by seven all the girls will be there, and by eight I should think the refreshments could be out of the way. You must have the refreshments first, of course. Then from eight till ten we can have these shows. The music will take up most of the time. I think we can have an uncommonly pleasant evening. I believe I shall take more interest in it than in any thing else going on this year — in the party and reception line, I mean."

"I don't know but I will."

"How lucky it is that some of the girls stay right here all summer, and can look after this thing! And they are just the right girls, too."

The prospect of this "ball," as Lucretia called it, roused enthusiasm in more than one quarter. On Sunday afternoon Lucretia bestowed unusual pains on her young pupils.

"Now, children, if you will be very, very good to-day, and all the week, I will take you to the most lovely ball you ever saw."

"Is it round and colored?"

"Billy, you don't understand what I mean. It is n't a play ball, but it is a lovely ball, with beautiful ladies and gentlemen, and lights and music, and things to eat if you're awful, awful good."

"Joey's good, Joey is, Miss McKinney!" squealed young Joseph.

"Very well, then, you shall go to the ball. I have had it all got ready for you, way off, and I am coming to get you at six o'clock on

Wednesday night, and you are to be very, very clean, or I shall not take you."

"Are you going to take Lizzie and me, Miss McKinney?" asked Lottie, a young woman of six.

"Yes, all of you, and you are to sing. Now, as you were all very good about your lesson, we will spend more time on the singing, because you are to sing that night. But I will ask you some more questions first, I think. Billy, who was Cain?"

"It's Lizzie's turn," said Billy.

"He was the son of Eden," answered Lizzie.

"He was not. He was the son of Eve," from Lottie.

"Tain't so. His pop was Adam!" from the biggest boy.

"Cain was the son of Adam and of Eve," said Lucretia, sternly. "What did Cain do that was wicked?"

"Whaled his brother."

"Jounced him."

"Licked him over the head with a club."

"He kilt him!" cried Joseph, triumphantly.

"Was that right?" asked their teacher.

"No 'm." "No." "He ought n' ter *killed* him."

"How ought he to have treated him?"

"Ought to have loved him."

"He ought to have wrestled with him and thrown him fair."

It was again the biggest boy, and the younger ones looked at him with some respect. He was very nearly seven.

"If Cain had had some candy what should he have done with it?" asked Lucretia, persuasively.

"Ought to eat it."

"Saved it."

"Give it to the baby."

"Gived half to Abel!"

"Good, Joey! You're smarter to-day than any one."

"'T ain't so," muttered the biggest boy.
"I'm smarter, Miss McKinney."

"He should have given half to Abel.

What should he have done if he had had some meat?" was the next question.

"Given half to Abel!" was shouted in a chorus.

"Should 'a' given *all* to Abel," said Billy, who did not like meat.

"What should you do if you had something nice?"

"Give some of it away to some one else," was the ready reply.

They had learned the application of Lucretia's lessons.

"What is your verse about loving each other?"

"'Little children, love one another!'" they yelled.

"Say what you have promised not to do."

"Not to lie, not to steal, not to swear, not to drink, not to smoke, not to chew."

"Good! Who was Noah?"

"A man," said Joseph, vaguely.

"Man in an ark, you little fool," said the biggest boy. "A man with a dove."

"Lived on the water down to Revere."

"On water like water at Revere," corrected Lucretia.

She was not quite sure whether Noah had lived at Revere or not.

"What made him such a good man?"

"He had faith in God."

"He did what God told him to."

"Was that right?"

"Yes 'm."

"What ought you to do?"

"To do what God says."

"What does God say to do?"

"To be good."

"Not to lie."

"To love Christ."

"To come here Sundays."

"To love him."

"Who loves you?"

"You do. Christ does. God does."

"Say this after me: 'God is love.'"

They said it after her several times, and she pronounced herself satisfied.

"Now we will sing. Stand in a row."

With much jostling and pushing, they stood in a row.

"No ; you must do that over again. You can't make so much fuss as that. You must go easy."

They tried it again.

"Billy and Lizzie, turn your toes out. You must n't crowd Joey out that way. Give him a fair chance. Now when I wave my hand three times," said Lucretia, in the superior tone that always reduced the children to the verge of imbecility, "and open my mouth to sing, you must all start in. Remember, now, it is Precious Jewels."

She waved her hand, and they began to sing. They sang in time, and well. Joseph shrieked fearfully in the high notes, and Billy had a tendency to transpose his words ; but Lucretia felt much gratified.

"Now, again !" and they sang it again.

She made numerous corrections: She made Joseph sing alone, and made Billy say the words before singing them, and finally she pronounced that they would do very well, and let them rest.

"Billy, is that a new collar you have on ?"

"Yes 'm," proudly. "Me mother bought it last night."

"Mine's going to get me a pair of shoes to-morrow," said another.

"That is fine!" said Lucretia. "You other boys shall have new collars for Wednesday night, and you're all to have new neckties; and, Tommie, you are to have a pair of slippers; your shoes look so bad. And Lizzie and Lottie, your aprons are nearly done. You'll look awful nice. A friend of mine is to present you with some magnificent lace collars."

Lizzie and Lottie spread out their dirty little frocks, and held up their heads in a lofty way.

Miss Thomas had also her trials in training her young friends for the eventful occasion. That night they sang for an hour on the hymn they had chosen. Miss Guernsey and Miss Trevor, who were there that night, as they had also been the first Sunday evening of the series, were much pleased with their success.

At six o'clock Wednesday evening there was a very stirring scene in the church parlors. The preparations were nearly made. Mrs. Carncross and Miss Clark were putting the finishing touches to the tables. Mrs. Arnold was admiring every thing in her genial way.

Pen, René, Miss Trevor, Miss Guernsey, and some of the other girls were earnestly discussing where the college boys had better stay before they played, where Lucretia's class had better be arranged before they sang, and how long it would be before supper was over.

"Is n't it just fine?" said Pen, with a sigh of satisfaction. "Think of the people who will be here! Let me see. Mrs. Gower is coming. Margie's father and mother are coming. You will like them so much! Mr. Chester, Mattie's uncle, will be here, and young Mr. Purdon will come, I think. We thought it was only fair to invite him to come, to let him know about it, as he was so kind about giving the room.

Several of the mothers of the girls will be here, and your sister, Gertrude. I am so glad she is coming!"

Some of the Lodge girls, Pauline and Georgie among them, came first.

"I am so glad you have come, Paul," said Pen, in a low tone, shaking hands; and she led her up to Mrs. Carncross. That lady had never seen her, and her surprise and pleasure when she first saw the girl's beautiful face were evident. Pen found Mrs. Arnold, and it was with real pleasure that she turned now and then to the group of three, the two gracious, kindly ladies and Paul. Pen was never tired of looking at Paul.

The next section to arrive was a rather clattering, noisy one. Lucretia entered with her class, and at once the parlors seemed to be full. Lucretia was gorgeously arrayed, and wandered through the rooms, her head well up, pointing to one thing and another, and explaining the virtue, use, and history thereof to her admiring class. The class looked very creditable. The children's faces

shone with soap and water. Their collars and neckties, being new, were unimpeachable in their brightness and cleanness. The two little girls looked quite like little models in their aprons, and the boy with the new shoes squeaked around in a ravishing way. The ladies had all heard about Lucretia, and greeted her cordially. And no one was likely to have an opportunity to overlook her class.

By seven o'clock all the reading-room habitués were present. The cash girls donned their caps and aprons and served the refreshments with a good will; others helped them, and general satisfaction seemed to reign.

“What good coffee!”

“Do have one of these tea biscuits! I’ve et five a’ready!”

“Just look at the cake a-coming!”

“Don’t you call this a real swell supper now?”

“I never had better oysters in my life!”

“Who would’a’ thought there would be so many of us!”

"This must have been quite a trouble."

"Wonder who that old lady is over there. Ain't she lovely, with the white hair and all, and such silk! I warrant she's rich!" The speaker referred to Mrs. Carncross.

Lucretia's class had a table to themselves, and thanks to her thoughtful ministrations they ate until they were nearly incapacitated for action. Joseph was so overcome that he went to sleep in his chair. Lucretia tried to rouse him, but as he went to sleep again as soon as she turned around, she decided to lay him somewhere until he was wanted. She was afraid he might be stepped on if laid on the floor, and she knew that all the sofas would soon be needed. It was not often that her powers of resource failed her, and on this occasion she calmly laid her sleeping pupil on the piano, from whence he was rescued by Mrs. Carncross herself; and that good lady held the sleepy, curly-haired, rosy-cheeked little mite most of the evening.

Lucretia flattered herself greatly over his success.

When the girls had eaten all that they conveniently could eat, the cash girls were waited upon in their turn. They all sat at one table, and, if possible, enjoyed themselves more than any one else.

By half-past eight the tables were cleared away, the guests were seated, and the friends who were expected to be present had nearly all arrived.

Pen had intended to make a neat little speech, introducing the assembly generally to itself, and would probably have succeeded if it had not been for an accident.

Lucretia was sitting quite near her, surrounded, like some old master's ideal of Charity, by her youthful class. Pen heard her say in a loud whisper, as she pointed to Rodney Hoare, "Do you see that handsome lord, Billy? that earl with the violin, a-standin' right there?"

"Did you say he was the Lord?" was the awed answer, in a still louder whisper.

"No; of course not! A lord is n't *the* Lord. You keep your mouth shut now!"

So Pen had hard work with her little speech, but it seemed to answer the purpose. She retired behind the piano, and later, while a duet was being played, she confided to Rodney Hoare the interesting bit of conversation.

"You must try to speak to Billy some time during the evening."

"I will," he said as well as he could for laughing.

Mrs. Carncross welcomed every one to the parlors, and Miss Trevor was to announce the various exhibits in turn during the evening.

"That lady," whispered Lucretia to Billy, who seemed to be the special repository of her confidences during the evening, "is a partiklar friend of mine. She is monstrous rich!"

"Why don't she wear a good dress like you, then?" said Billy, eying Miss Trevor critically. Her dark gown, supposed by her benighted admirers to be a triumph of art, did not find favor in his sight. But when

she played on the violin shortly after, with Lucretia's "earl," his enthusiasm rose.

"Don't she play though!" he cried, to the amusement of every body.

It was decided that the class should sing next, for fear that they would be too sleepy to stand up, if their singing were delayed. For the past fifteen minutes Mrs. Carncross had been cautiously and affectionately arousing Joseph. He was made to understand that he was to sing, and he endeavored manfully to steady himself on his stout little legs, and to keep his head from nodding again into Mrs. Carncross's lap.

Miss Trevor announced that a little friend of theirs, one of the cash girls, Miss Lucretia McKinney, had collected some alley children, and had taught them every Sunday afternoon in the Hanover Street reading-room. She said that the children were present and would sing.

The children marched gravely into line. Lucretia waved her hand three times, and opened her mouth to sing. Then they be-

gan. They sang their very best. Joseph was too sleepy to shriek perceptibly, and Billy remembered his words. They really sang very creditably, and the audience was evidently delighted.

Mr. Chester moved that a vote of thanks be tendered to Miss McKinney for bringing her class to sing.

Miss McKinney's pride and joy knew no bounds. Her face was irradiated.

"That gentleman, Billy," — she had not even seen Mr. Chester, — "is one of my most intimate friends — or will be."

"He looks like Father Christmas!" murmured Billy, rising and turning to look at him.

A short intermission came next, and there was a lively buzz through the room. Mrs. Carncross recaptured Joseph, who seemed in no wise displeased, and Rodney Hoare secured Billy, and led him behind the piano. Pen took advantage of the intermission and made a visiting tour among her friends.

"How are you enjoying yourself, Paul? And you, Georgie?"

"Oh, we're having a lovely time!" was the quick answer.

"How do you like it, Mr. Chester? You did not think there were so many girls, did you? They have all been to our rooms, and I believe every one of them would say that she was a better girl for it."

"Bless my soul! Certainly, certainly! My dear child, how I do appreciate the work you have all done!" and the old gentleman shook her hand heartily.

"O Mrs. Harding — and Mr. Harding. I am so glad you are both here. I should have been so disappointed not to have seen you. What did you think of Lucretia's class? I hope you will speak to Lucretia, Mrs. Harding; she would be delighted. There is Pauline Carr, talking to the lady by the table; that is Mrs. Arnold. You must meet her. You are enjoying it?"

"More than I can tell you. I was so excited when those children were singing! Think of my little Ted being in their places!"

"Mr. Purdon? Excuse me," — and Pen

looked at him, smiling, — “ I have seen you once before. I am so glad you could come. We all feel so deeply indebted to you for that room. It was our starting-point.”

“ I think not, if you will pardon me. You must have started before that ! ” was the cordial answer. “ I have been very much interested in what I have heard. I only came in a short time ago. How many you have here ! ”

“ Yes ; there is a house called the Lodge, where several of your clerks live, then the reading-room you gave us, and three more rooms. We can accommodate quite a number.”

“ If there is any thing that I could do at any time, in this or any thing else like it, I would be very, very glad to do so. I hope you will believe me,” he said, rather hesitatingly.

“ Indeed, I do believe you, and I think you are very kind about it. You have given us every reason to think that it would be profitable to ask your aid.”

"Well, Kate and Biddy, how does the world go with you?" was her next greeting. "Are n't we having a pleasant time?"

"Just beautiful! Won't my mother be grand pleased!" cried Kate, fervently.

"I had such a good supper!" said Biddy, with equal emphasis.

Miss Trevor informed the audience that five of the Hanover reading-room girls would sing; and the five little cash girls, still in their aprons and caps, stepped out in a row to sing. Lucretia led the singing, and her voice was so clear and strong and true that there was perfect silence in the room that she might be heard. The other little girls had good voices and sang well, but Lucretia's voice was something unusual.

There was great applause when the singing was brought to a close.

"Mrs. Carncross wants you to sing Jerusalem the Golden, Lucretia," said Miss Thomas.

The other girls went to their seats and Lucretia sang alone. She enjoyed singing;

she sang very easily. She lingered on the notes and words as she pleased, without any particular reference to the way she had been taught, but the effect was wonderfully good.

There seemed to be a deep breath drawn all over the room when she was through.

"Lucretia has had the greatest triumph of the evening," said Pen, with marked satisfaction, to René and Miss Trevor.

"That is a fact," was the laughing answer.

Dr. Arnold had come in, and he made a few remarks to the girls. He spoke kindly and earnestly, and they seemed much gratified.

Mrs. Arnold heard some of the remarks of the girls near her.

"He 's the minister."

"Ain't he a handsome man?"

"They say his wife 's here, too."

"They say he has an awfully big salary!"

"Some of the girls come here to church."

"It is a swell church, they say."

"Right friendly, though."

There was some more music, and then Miss

Trevor said: "Miss Randolph will say a little something to you all before we break up for the evening. I have felt that I had to introduce every one else to you. I have even had to introduce to you your own cash girls. But Miss Randolph, I am thankful to say, is known to all of you."

Pen stepped forward to the piano.

"I wish to say a few words to you, now that you are all here together. Some of us leave the city shortly, and we take this opportunity of bidding you good-by, and of saying a little something to you all, that we might not, perhaps, have a chance to say to you separately. We have been very glad, this winter, to have met you all in the way we have. We can say frankly and sincerely that it has done us good. We feel that the winter has been of much use to us, and I could hardly say here how much, how very much, we hope that our knowing you has been also of service to you.

"Some of us will not again return to the city. Some of you will also go away, per-

haps, and it is hardly likely that many of us shall meet again. But however that may be, I hope that the remembrance of this winter's work, and of what we have learned together, may stay with us and make us all in some degree better women than we might otherwise have been.

"The rooms will be kept open right along. Our coming and going will make little difference. There will always be others to take our places. The use and benefit of the rooms really depend on yourselves. You can continue to make them, as it seems to us you have made them, pleasant and full of interest.

"Personally, I would like to say that every one of you I have grown to know, I have also grown to like, and that I truly wish that I had been better acquainted with you all."

There was a murmur and rustle among the girls as Pen finished her remarks. Kate, whose Irish feelings were easily moved, indulged in rather loud weeping for the space of two minutes, so much was she overcome. But the others seemed much pleased.

There was more music, and then there was a general preparation for home. Pen, René, and the other girls hurried around to speak to every body. There was plenty of vigorous hand-shaking and cordial words on every side.

The class had to be gotten together, and Mrs. Carncross delivered up young Joseph to the masterful Lucretia McKinney with something like a sigh.

Pen, René, and Miss Trevor were the last ones to leave the room.

“Girls,” said Pen, “after what we have seen to-night, I believe more firmly than ever that we will never have any excuse for standing idle in the market-place.”

And the other two agreed with her.

